

SEEMS SO!  
A WORKING-CLASS VIEW  
OF POLITICS

STEPHEN REYNOLDS  
AND BOB & TOM WOOLLEY



AE Hawkins

1912



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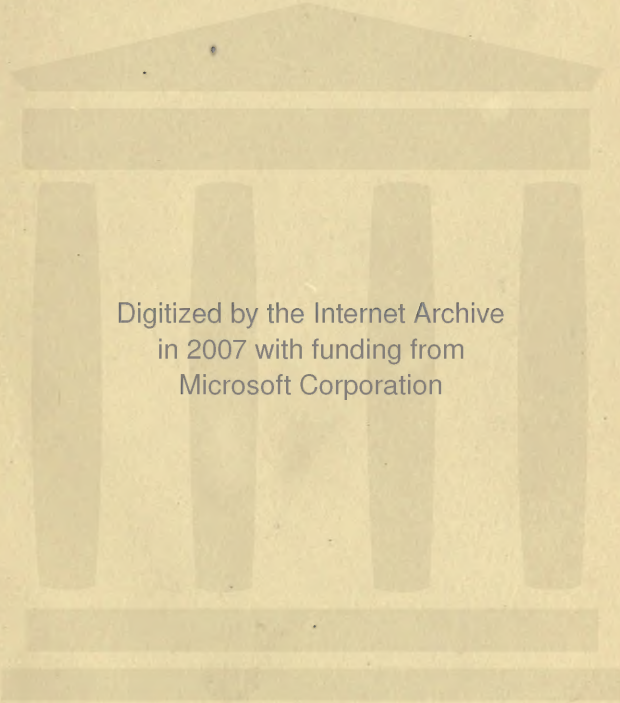
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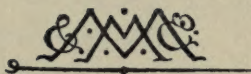
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# SEEMS SO!

A WORKING-CLASS VIEW  
OF POLITICS

BY

STEPHEN REYNOLDS

AND

BOB & TOM WOOLLEY

WITH FRONTISPIECE FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY  
MELVILLE MACKAY

*'Tis a complicated affair o'it!*—DEVON SAYING.

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TO  
OUR FRIEND  
HAROLD WRIGHT





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## INTRODUCTION

(By STEPHEN REYNOLDS)

MORE often than not, when I have told people that I was writing a book in collaboration with two fishermen, they have smiled indulgently, as if I were telling an amiable untruth, and have said, 'You mean, of course, that *you* are writing it.' They found it hard to believe that any working men, thumb-fingered with a pen and dubious over spelling, could really have a hand in the writing of a book. They made the very general mistake of supposing that those who lack the means of ready expression have nothing in their minds to express.

Nevertheless, the book is a true collaboration, although one of us has done all the pen-work, and although, for simplicity's sake, the greater part of it has been printed serially under my name only. Even where I have written in the first person—'I this . . .' 'I that . . .'—it is still a collaboration,

but those passages represent contributions to the common stock which were more particularly mine; just as we invented the Perring family in order to express naturally, in their proper dialect and atmosphere, the contributions which were more particularly my collaborators' ; for opinions out of their atmosphere are like sentences without the context. Every page, however, has been debated and passed by the three of us. Our usual method has been, first to pick up a subject that interested us, perhaps a subject we had been talking about for a long while, then to discuss it and argue over it, ashore and afloat, in company and by ourselves, till we came to our joint conclusion. Then on a rough day, in a set-to discussion, I would take down notes, which frequently amounted in length to more than half the finished article. From the notes I would make a rough draft, which, after more discussion, would be re-written, and again, after revision, typewritten. We would go through the printer's proofs together, and finally, after reading the matter in print, we have once more revised it for book publication. Collaboration could not very well be more thorough. In writing books—unless, to be sure, they are copy-books—the mere act of writing with a pen and spelling conventionally is not the chief part.

It is the words themselves, the feeling, the ideas, which count. If I had a secretary, and never touched a pen myself nor banged away at a typewriter, I shouldn't be expected to say that my secretary wrote my books. Similarly, my own share in *Seems So!* is precisely this: I am one of three collaborators, and secretary to the three.

Indeed, I should like to own, in the frankest possible manner, that even if I had written the book alone, without troubling my collaborators at all, their share in it would still have been considerable. For if, as seems probable, I have urged them on to weigh up what they really do think and feel, and to get it into words; and have brought before them facts and theories which otherwise they might not have come across, it is quite certain that they have opened to me a new world of ideas and feelings, the world of the so-called masses—that great seething pot of human lives, only less huge than the volcanic earth itself, on the lid of which a comparatively few articulate people, writers, politicians, publicists, organizers, perform their antics, more heedful of their antics than of what's beneath (so long as the lid doesn't blow off), and liable, moreover, to have their fingers badly burnt if they poke about inside.

Thus, the three of us have done together, as well as we could, what neither of us separately could have done at all—which, surely, is the essence of collaboration. While I was plunging into their work, and half in joke, half in earnest, the fishing and boating firm of ‘Woolley and Reynolds’ was coming into being for certain purposes of useful co-operation, it was but natural that a literary firm of ‘Reynolds and Woolley’ should also grow into being for certain other purposes of collaboration. Three men, working together, playing together, watching together, and, above all, going to sea together in small boats, able to argue and cuss at each other, as if there were murder in the air, without being any the less friends—they get to know each other’s minds pretty well. Though each of us could have enlarged on some points in some directions, here is what we are agreed upon. But it doesn’t say much for the reality of party politics that the three men — one an enthusiastic Tariff Reformer, another a Free Trader, and the third a political dark-horse whose way of voting nobody knows—should find themselves so extensively in agreement on so many political subjects. Evidently there’s a link broken somewhere between politics and people.



Devonshire-men are great at phrase-making : they possess for the purpose, and still use, a splendidly flexible, humorous dialect, only the bare bones of which can be got into writing. When they wish to make a statement which they are ready to grant is after all a matter of opinion or point of view, they first of all make the statement as emphatically as possible, and then admit the possibility of doubt by adding *Seems so !* or *Looks so !* Somewhat in the same way a public speaker *ventures to think* his convictions. And hence the title of this book. We have aimed at expressing a point of view—the working-man's. Especially have we tried to express the working-man's *feeling* about things, because we recognize, as Herbert Spencer pointed out so long ago, that it is a man's feelings rather than his opinions, his emotions rather than his intellectual ideas, which make him what he is, and ultimately govern his actions : because, in short, the opinions a man swallows out of the general mass of opinion are those which his feelings render palatable to him. To this day, working people seem to be better aware than the educated of that fact. They always reckon up a man finally by what his feeling is. Only incidentally, and mainly in

Part II., have we attempted directly to compare different points of view, to trace their causes, and to estimate their rightness. Our aim was rather to contrast them. Nor, in the dialogues, have we tried to search out the very best arguments which could be produced by the exceptional men on either side. Our concern was more with the arguments commonly used. Although, of course, we fully believe what we say, we don't so much wish to assert that, 'This is right, that is wrong,' as that, 'Whether right or wrong, those are feelings, these are the opinions, which will have to be reckoned with sooner or later.' Some of the subjects have already become slightly out of date, but the point of view has not. The repetitions are of things often repeated in workaday life.

One or two points may well be dealt with in advance, even at the risk of being said to have anticipated criticism. (Why shouldn't one anticipate criticism, if by so clearing the ground one can come any quicker to the main point?) The question is sure to be asked, 'How far is *Seems So* ! representative of the working classes as a whole, or only of a few West-Country fishermen?' To which we may equally well retort, 'How can any man know intimately the working classes all over

the country and work with them everywhere at all their occupations? Life isn't long enough, nor man strong enough.' The alternative lies, not between knowing a few people and knowing all to an equal degree, but between scratching the surface of the whole of a field, and digging a portion of it spade-deep in order to gain some idea of the under-soil throughout. Working-class society is quite as exclusive as Society with a big S, in face of those who don't belong to it by birth or occupation; as I know to my cost when I go to a place where I have no working-class friends or introductions, and find myself out in the cold. The notion that inspectors, investigating persons, and such-like should ever get into close touch with it, should ever become freemen of it, is as absurd to us, the inspected and investigated, as that we should be welcomed in to dinner at the Carlton Hotel, say, any evening we chose to turn up in herring-stinking jerseys and sea-boots. They'd look askance at us. They'd shrink into their shells till the police had chucked us out. They wouldn't say to us, 'Come along in, you. No doubt you've excellent intentions. Hell about your rig! Sit down—what's the *hors-d'œuvre*?—and we'll tell you all about our finances and our little domestic

troubles.' Neither do we say it, on our part, to anybody who chooses to come to us. Their education itself is a bar to their understanding properly the little they do see and hear. To those who cannot understand, one does not reveal oneself, except maybe at one's own time, in one's own way.

Besides that, two of us *are* working men, always have been, and expect to continue so. Books by writers who have ceased to be working men are not rare ; some of them are admirable ; but it is very seldom that the actual working man, as such, has found anything like direct literary expression, without obtaining first a literary education and becoming by that the less a typical working man. Except through deputies, mostly self-appointed, he has had to remain unheard. As a rule, there is no one so out of sympathy with working-class life as the man who has just climbed above it ; there are certainly no such sharks in their dealings with working people. The devotion of the Labour Members to their own idea of working-class welfare, and the divorce of most of them from working-class feeling, is one of the most disheartening spectacles in modern politics.

It cannot be denied, of course, that a variety of opinions *is* held by working people in various

parts of the country. They are confronted, according to occupation and so forth, by a variety of subjects to form opinions on. But the trend of those opinions, the method of forming them, the point of view, and, more important still, the underlying feeling—these are much the same everywhere. Living in a seaside place, and therefore meeting very frequently with working people from a distance and from the great towns, we find them more in touch with us—more ‘like the likes of a fellow’s self’—than people of other classes who have lived in the neighbourhood all their lives. Railways, the penny postage, and domestic service have combined to knit working people together, in acquaintanceship and feeling if not in circumstances. Town and country, and counties far apart, intermarry. A large percentage of city-dwellers spent the impressionable days of their childhood in small towns and villages. Children scatter far and wide, yet keep in contact with their families, and return home for holidays. Superficially they acquire new habits, though it is astonishing how quickly they can shed them again. Much less easily do they acquire new habits of mind. They remain of their own people. As Captain Marlow says so often of the outcast Jim, in Joseph Conrad’s deeply psycho-



logical tale, *Lord Jim* : 'He was one of us. He is one of us.' Which is a thing one knows or doesn't know, feels or fails to feel, without set proof. In a country where, being poor, one may not even sleep under the sky without money in one's pocket, the economic difference tells most in the long run. Between master and man, ruler and ruled, top-dog and under-dog ; the man who has something to start on and something to fall back on, and the man who has neither ; the man who looks forward to a competency at the end of his working days, and the man who can only look forward to a bare subsistence at best ; the man to whom failure means bankruptcy and diminished ease, and the man to whom it means starvation for himself and for his wife and children ; between the man of one tradition and of another, of one education and of another, of one domestic habit and of another, of one class-feeling and of another class-feeling—that is where the line of cleavage runs through town and country alike. Compared with that wide cleavage, the political cleft is narrow and artificial. It serves to obscure the issue, and is used for that purpose. Whatever else he may be, a working man is first and foremost a working man. One recognizes it, feels it, without further inquiry.



He betrays it as indefinably and as certainly as a man betrays himself who has been accustomed to authority. It is the common opinion and point of view, the underlying feeling of working men in general, that we have tried to set forth.

Several times we have been asked, 'Why be so down on the likes o' they?' Most of them mean very well, and are very decent people. Do you hate the likes o' they?' On the contrary, we have many good friends among the likes o' they, and often great pleasure in their company. But it is impossible to attack a system—the class system or any other—without attacking those who carry it out and are made what they are by it; those who, collectively, are the system. Dives may have been a kindly old boy, and Lazarus a lazy sponger, but the point of the parable remains just the same. Class antagonism is a very powerful force, growing rather than diminishing, acting in all sorts of unsuspected ways, cropping up in all sorts of unexpected places. Let things go wrong, make a false step, and in a moment it flashes out: 'Ignorant fellow!'—'Bloody gen'leman!' It was there, beneath, all the time. Each side wrongs the other; but neither side seems fully to realize how unconsciously most of the wrong is done, how much it is a matter of upbringing

and atmosphere, of different impulses and standards, of *esprit de corps*. In consequence, men are called robbers and oppressors, thieves and mobs, and have to be treated as such, who nevertheless, according to their lights, are quite honest and well-meaning. A man's best may be very bad for some one. Perhaps the remarkable growth in self-consciousness which appears to be taking place all round, will shake men's sense of their own rectitude, and will enable the cross-account—for it is a cross-account—to be settled up. The fight lies really, not between conflicting interests, but between different habits of mind. If anything specially and needlessly offensive be found in *Seems So!* it had better be put down entirely to me. Probably it is mine.

We have also been told : ‘ You say all this, but you don't propose any remedy. What are your remedies ? ’ In the first place, it was not our aim to propose remedies. And in the second place, if, by remedies, more new legislation is meant, then we haven't any to propose. Parliament makes little laws quite fast enough without being urged thereto. It's the line of least resistance, and an excellent thing, no doubt, for lawyers and officials. Pope's hackneyed couplet, though not all-sufficient, is still much to the point :

For forms of government let fools contest ;  
Whate'er is best administer'd is best.

The parallel between the body politic and the body personal is singularly close. As soon as something is seen to be wrong, those who realize it call upon Parliament for more laws, instead of doing each what lies in his power to right the wrong ; just as the doctor is called upon for more drugs as a substitute for healthy living ; in both cases with very similar results. It is, it seems to us, the vice of modern press-run politics, that the glare cast on the symptoms obscures the disease. And the controlling influence of the mind is better recognized in medicine than in politics, which equally depend on mind and feeling. In that direction, I think it will be found that we have suggested not so much remedies as lines of remedial action, of living more healthily, of bringing the body politic into a healthier state, less in need of legislative drugs.

It seems, however, as if a re-valuation of different sorts of work will have eventually to be made ; and it is difficult to see how the evils of the industrial system can be cured without tackling thoroughly the problem of the limited liability, unlimited dividend-paying, company.

By borrowing at interest the capital of investors who take no active part whatever in the work itself, the company system has overloaded production and commerce with usury, the evils of which are much the same now as in the days when Moses commanded, 'If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.'

But it occurs to us, from a consideration of the middleman-ridden fish-trade, that a great deal of the trouble between Capital and Labour is really caused by the reckless multiplication of non-productive middlemen, brought about both by modern competition and by new commercial facilities. Called into being as often as not to serve a temporary purpose, the middleman occupies a favourable position at the centre of exchange—midway between production and consumption, supply and demand—for regulating prices to his own advantage, for speculating to his own profit, and for continuing to live on production whether he is still useful or not. The creation of unnecessary middlemen, in order to gain a temporary advantage on the markets or in competition, is like running lead into seven-league boots in order

to kick a rival. It is on a par with that piling up of armaments which leaves nations pretty well where they were relatively, and collectively much poorer than they would have been—a process very exactly repeated in, for instance, the advertising world.

Social reform, so-called, and financial reform have been purposely confused. What we ask for is not that kind of social reform which is forced on people from without by means of punitive laws, but the economic opportunity for working people to develop in their own way, on their own lines; though, without doubt, a genuine social reform from within—a reform in people's habits of mind—is necessary to successful economic reform.

It has to be acknowledged that among the worst of the working-man's political enemies is himself. Not that he is greatly to be blamed. He has the defects of his qualities. He balks himself. See how easily at any election he can be divided into two or more parties, each of which neutralizes the other; and the men who pull the wires retain the power! See what a bad time he gives his leaders, though all the while he may be very attached to them. If working people are to hold their own, to win their fight, they will have



to overcome their unnecessary suspiciousness and their shrinking from collective responsibility (both very excusable, the outcome of hard experience), and they will have to develop certain social qualities essential to sound political fighting. And I do not, I cannot, I wish I could, see how they are to develop those social qualities without losing or spoiling others which are still more valuable to the race—their courage to live, their fertility, their happy-go-luckiness, their recklessness even.

We seem, indeed, to have come to a stage where the welfare of society and the welfare of the race are by no means identical, and we have often to choose between the two. Blake, for instance, says with profound truth : ‘ Prudence is a rich, ugly old maid, waited upon by incapacity.’ Society demands more prudence. The good of the race demands less. Recklessness still has its uses. Society demands a damping-down of individual life. Not so the race. The race demands more and more life, and it cares nothing whether that lifefulness dovetails into any industrial or political system whatever. It is of no use offering men art, comfort, scope for their milder inclinations, if, as a condition, outlet for their passions and for their ambitions is denied them. Their



passions and ambitions will burst it all up. It is of no use offering them freedom from destitution, if, as a condition, they must knuckle under to a scheme of industrial conscription like the Webb Minority Report; or offering them National Insurance if the result is to make the master more powerfully a master, and the man more impotently a workman than ever. Life is a gamble, and men will have it so: for their instinct tells them that getting into a rut leads to madness, stagnation to death. One prediction may pretty confidently be made; any society whose welfare involves racial harm will go to pieces; and any reform which involves the slowing down of life will be destroyed by life itself, because the foundation on which the whole stands is simply the impulse to live.

There, or thereabout, lies our quarrel with Socialism. Useful as a leaven, it carries as a system its own destruction within it. Were it practicable, it would be unnecessary. It is possible to honour the socialists on account of their good intentions; but, at the same time, the worst tyranny to beware of is that of intellectuals ordering other people's lives. They are so well-intentioned, so merely logical, so cruel.

It may, perhaps, be pointed out that many of the empirical conclusions in *Seems So !* find a philosophical basis in the work of Henri Bergson ; notably, the protest, implicit throughout, against the over-intellectualization of human affairs ; the validity and importance assumed throughout for feelings, instincts, and intuitional methods of arriving at conclusions ; the attempt, unfortunately very sketchy, to base economics on, and to express it in terms of life itself ;<sup>1</sup> and the comparison made between *reasoning a thing out* and *weighing it up*.<sup>2</sup> I confess, with more than admiration for the great French philosopher, that when I read his works after the greater part of *Seems So !* had been written, it was like running safely into harbour from a confused sea with one's little catch of fish, or taking one's catch into the market and finding it fetched a better price than one had dared to expect. It seems to have escaped the notice of M. Bergson's critics that he provides for democracy such a defence as its purely intellectualist supporters have never been able to put forward.

For serial hospitality we have to thank the

<sup>1</sup> 'Labour and Brain Work,' p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> 'Various Conclusions,' pp. 296-300.

editors of the *English Review*, the *Evening Standard*, the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Nation*, the *New Age*, the *Quarterly Review*, the *Times*, *T. P.'s Magazine*, and the editor of the *Spectator*, on whose suggestion the book was begun, though we are afraid he wouldn't by any means like to be held responsible for everything in it.

S. R.

SIDMOUTH, *June* 1911.

*P.S.*—The whole of *Seems So!* was written before the recent series of strikes and 'sympathetic strikes' which have so amply fulfilled a good deal in it.

*October* 1911.



I

I

B





## I. ELECTIONEERING

WHILE the Perring family was at dinner, one of the elder children looked out of the door and ran back, saying, 'Here's Mrs. Balkwill coming, an' thic grow'd-up maid of hers. Got gert 'lection ribbons up, they have, an' they'm coming in here, looks so.'

It couldn't have been a worse time. Owing to the wet weather, Mrs. Perring, who has nowhere to dry any clothes, was two days late with her washing. The kitchen, where the baby, with another baby, had had to play all the morning, was up to neck. The baby herself had been twice slapped for playing with the ashes, and slapping, as one knows, doesn't make babies look any cleaner. Over the table newspapers were spread, so that one more dirty tablecloth could be washed. In the interests of cleanliness, the kitchen was thoroughly untidy.

With hardly a 'May I come in?' Mrs. Balkwill, followed by the daughter, swept down the narrow passage as if she had a right there. She was dressed in a style that Mrs. Perring can only envy or make fun of from afar off.

'Good morning. I've got very little time,' she began. 'You're going to vote for our man, Mr. Perring. Perring, isn't it, your name? Oh, what a dear little baby!'

She attempted to pet the child—at arm's length, so to speak.

'Git 'ome an' die, you dirty ning!' rapped out the child, with a very plain resentment.

While her mother was saying, 'Come here an' see what Mam's got for 'ee,' and everybody else was pretending not to have heard, Dave got up and handed his chair to Mrs. Balkwill. 'Please to take a seat,' he said. 'I be sorry you should have come when 'tis like 'tis. But 'tis all right, you know—only a bit up-an'-down for the time, like.'

'Oh, never mind,' answered Mrs. Balkwill, with an enthusiasm for standing up. While she tried to hold her skirts tight round her with one hand, and to open a canvasser's book with the other, she rattled on : 'I can put you down as a safe vote for

our side, can't I? I'm sure we shall win this time. So many people are changing over. . . .'

'Whose side might you be on, please?' asked Dave, to gain time.

'Why, the right side, of course. *Our* side. We are working hard for Curtis, aren't we, Nina?'

'But who, if so be I might ask, who told you I was going to vote for Mr. Curtis?'

'Oh, but of course you are. He's such a nice man; a thorough gentleman, and a splendid candidate. See what a lot of good he's done in the constituency. He's spent—oh, I can't tell you how much he's spent—spent money like water, and all for the working classes. If he doesn't get in this time, he'll leave the district, and go somewhere else—he said so, didn't he, Nina?—and then you'll lose all that.'

''Twon't be no loss to me. I an't see'd none of his money. I haven't never had what I didn't earn. An' as for voting for him, I don' know w'er I shall take the trouble to vote at all this time.'

'Oh, but you must; you really must. It's your duty as a citizen to use your vote, and put Curtis in. *You* know; you put your cross opposite Curtis—C-U-R-T-I-S. It's only a cross you need

put. That isn't difficult. What time shall I send a motor-car for you ?'

'You needn't send no motor-car, thank you, not unless the young lady there wants to take me for a drive up-country. If I do go to vote, I can walk up. But very likely I shan't. What's the use ? What have 'em ever done for me, or the likes of me ? Is it any easier to live, an' keep out of debt ? That's what I looks at. An' we knows 't isn't, 'cept for them as got plenty. Yet they kicks up a buzz about an election, as if your life was depending on it ; an' whichever side gets in, they don't do nort, 'cepting they makes a few more rules an' regulations, an' fines 'ee or puts 'ee in chokey for not carrying of 'em out ; an' then they has another 'lection, an' 'tis all the same all over again, buzzing round 'ee like flies, same as they be now. Hanged if I blame ol' Charlie Whimble for saying anybody can have his vote, which way they like, for five shillings ! He'll never get five shill'orth out of it no other way, never, so long as he lives.'

'Oh, but you mustn't talk like that. It's *very* wrong to sell your vote to the other side. That's what makes some people talk about taking away the vote from the working classes, and giving it to

educated people, who'll know how to use it. You're liable to I don't know what penalties.'

'I don't say I be going to sell mine, 'cause I bain't, not if you asks me to. But I don't blame a man for selling what isn't no use to him, if he's minded. What's Charlie Whimble got out of all his voting? He's worse off 'n when he started; an' he have a-worked hard in his time, ol' Charlie.'

'But *you* are better off. See what the working classes have had done for them.'

'Certainly I'm better off than I have a-been; I'll own that: but I an't got nothing I haven't worked for; an' I got to live an' rear chil'ern in this here ol' crib. How'd *you* like it? Look around 'ee! An' Missis there is worked off her legs. You wouldn't come here, none o'ee, 'cept for persuading of me to vote which way you want. An' then you don't fancy sitting down in the midst o' what us got to live in, 'cause us can't afford houses an' servants. . . .'

Dave was becoming heated to the point of cussing, and Mrs. Balkwill exercised tact. 'Well,' she said. 'Tell me. Which way *are* you going to vote?'

'I an't never told nobody which way I've a-voted, an' I never will, an' never shan't; so



you'll have to 'scuse me telling of 'ee that. I shall vote according to me feelings—if I do.'

'Your husband's a hard case,' said Mrs. Balkwill, turning to Mrs. Perring with what is called a sweet smile. 'But you must persuade him to vote *our* way. You will, won't you? Women have such opportunities.'

'Twouldn't be no use me trying to persuade him,' replied Mrs. Perring, with a certain bitterness. 'Most likely he'd go 'n do just the opposite. 'Tis best in the long run for to let men go their ways.'

'Ah, well,' said Mrs. Balkwill, taking the hint, and glancing at her bracelet watch, 'if I don't hurry home my lunch will be getting cold. Good morning. But remember, Mr. Perring, that I shall trust you to come and vote for us. Our motto is "Trust the People." Come along, Nina.'

With a rustle of silk petticoats, she left the house.

Dave turned over his greasy cold dinner with a knife's point. Then, quite suddenly, he sat up straight, and snapped out loudly : 'Liar !'

'"Trust the People,"' he repeated. '*Liars !*' he burst out again.

'Liar ! Liar ! Liar !' echoed the baby.

Mrs. Perring, who does not mind bad language,



but does not like it violent, told him to hold his row.

‘ Well,’ said Dave, ‘ so they be liars, all the lot o’em. “ Trust the People,” did her say ? They wouldn’t trust ’ee further ’n they could see ’ee, n’ eet so far. Said her’d trust me, didn’t her ? I’ve heard chaps say, as have worked up to her house, that her locks up everywhere they bain’t working in, an’ won’t let ’em hae a cup for to drink a drop o’ tay out of. That’s when you finds out they sort, what they got in their minds.

‘ I calls it bribery, nort more nor less, for a parcel o’ women to run about persuading of ’ee which way to vote, an’ driving of ’ee up to the poll. You can see they’m working for their own ends, an’ got summut to get out o’ it, or thinks they have ; else they wouldn’t take so much trouble. They don’t take no notice o’ ee other times, an’ when they’ve a-got their man into Parliament, you won’t hear no more of he nuther, till next ’lection. Got to hold *his* tongue, too, I s’pose, like us have a-got to.

‘ ’Tisn’t as if they tries to make it plain to ’ee, what the points is, them as thinks they knows. Thic woman, what did her say for to make it clearer ? Why, nort at all any sense ! Trying

to persuade me all her know'd, wasn't her, as if I was a blooming kid? 'Tis a muddled affair o'it, I tell 'ee. Last 'lection was supposed to be between Tariff Reform an' Free Trade. But come to it, they was all chattering 'bout the Navy and Lord Charles Beresford. That's all thee cou'st hear on 'lection day. They tries for to miz-maze 'ee up a-purpose, so's you shall vote according to their opinion 'stead of your own. An' they thinks the likes o' us don't know we'm being fooled. But us do.'

'Up you get, then,' said Mrs. Perring, putting the baby down. '*I* an't got time for to play the fool to no one's bidding. Lord Charles won't do my washing any more than thic Mrs. Balkwill will. I wonder if her'd do it for thy vote? Come on! I wants to clear away. Politics won't help *me*.'

But Dave, once started, was not to be shut up.

'Amuses me,' he continued. 'Hanged if it don't! "You knows where to put your cross?" they says, as if you didn't know nort. "Which way be going to vote?" they asks 'ee; but they bain't going to find out which way I votes, an' if they did I'd vote t'other way. "You leave Dave alone," another o'em says. "Dave's all right.

Dave's going to chime in with the rest. What be going to drink, Dave?" I reckon I *should* deserve to lose me vote if I was to take heed of all their chackle.

'But as for taking the vote away from working people an' giving it to them that's educated, like thic woman said. What do they sort know about it much more 'n us do? They bain't no more agreed amongst theirselves 'n us be, n'eet so much ; an' *we* do know how us got to live. How 'bout thic clergyman t'other day, what told me Lloyd George ought to be shot? An' t'other side talks like it too. Clergymen is supposed to be educated, bain't 'em? 'Twouldn't have done for me to tell 'en he was talking ignorant. You get in amongst them that calls themselves educated, bettermost people, an' listen to their chawl. Certainly they can talk 'ee down, or fancies they can. An' where do 'em get it from mostly? Why, out the newspapers ! Newspapers is written by educated people, I s'pose ; yet they'm always in disagreement, an' flying at each other's throats ; which means either they'm liars for their own advantage, or else they'm ignorant, an' don't know what's best to be done no more than us do.

'I tell 'ee, 'twon't do. Nuther one of the sides

is worth voting for, an' if you don't vote, then that don't make nothing no better. You can't do nort. 'Tis headwinds all ways. But 'twon't last for ever. People's getting to see it, an' when more of 'em sees it plainer, sees it 'lection times so well as ordinary, they won't put up wi' it. 'Twill have to alter. You see !'

'Thee wou'sn't see it in thy time,' said Mrs. Perring. 'So git 'long !'

As he left the kitchen, he slammed the door behind him. And the bang of it sounded unusually full of meaning. Like a threat, it was, prepared to bide the time.

## 2. THE SUFFRAGETTES

IN London the suffragettes have held up public business. Here, in a working man's household a hundred and fifty miles from town, their agitation scarcely stirs us. We are lookers-on ; and whether or no we see most of the game, we are not, like the players, under an obligation to take sides. We do not imagine that we know the facts of the woman suffrage question, or of any other political question, either completely or accurately. Who does ? All we can say is, ' Seems so to us.' But according to that ' Seems so ' we shall vote, though for which party at the next election we haven't the slightest idea ; and our votes will count as much as anybody else's. Food to eat and a house over us is our great question ; political questions are our recreation. The suffragettes have worried Ministers, scandalized the Commons, and disorganized the police. They amuse us.

One of the children rushed home last week :  
'Mother, Miss Penley-Jones says you got to come to a meeting an' hear what they suffragettes be going to do, an' her'll give 'ee a cup o' tay.'

Mrs. Perring was trying to cook dinner, iron the sheets, and nurse the baby at the same time.

'You go back,' she said, 'an' tell Miss Penley-Jones that I don't intend to mix meself up wi' the likes o' they, an' I got me own cup o' tay in house, thank you, wi'out wasting time wi' chatter-megs. They don't give 'ee tay when they don't want nort.'

Mrs. Perring does not wish for a vote, and she does not believe that most working women do. She says she has no time to waste on politics, as men have. In England there is a vast number of women who, needing neither to struggle nor to work, never come to handgrips with life, and never can learn what a working woman has to contend with ; and Mrs. Perring resents any system under which the women who are fully occupied with living would have to depend politically on the busybodies who do not know what life really is. 'I should have to follow the lead,' she says, 'of the Miss Penley-Joneses, what puts on us enough as 'tis. Her's got time 'cause



her an't never learnt to look after nothing—that I do know—while me that has had to learn experience, I an't got time to be troubled wi' it, an' never shan't have. I reckon they suffragettes wants half-a-dozen kids like this yer squad o' mine. That'd steady 'em.'

Dave Perring wished to know their aim. On learning that they claim votes, first, because they pay rates and taxes, and secondly, because they say they will do a lot of good when they get them, he was much surprised. 'They'm not kicking up all thic buzz for that?'

'They say they are.'

'What do 'em propose to do 'xactly?'

'That they don't say.'

'Then if they don' know what they want, what do 'em want it for? I tell thee what, 'tis sweet-hearts they wants. There's nort like it for a girl as is kicking up a buzz. I've a-proved it.'

'But don't you remember the fuss and speeches they made when it was reported that one of them had thrown her arms round a Member of Parliament's neck?'

'G'out! Pleased an' proud enough he was, I bet; her too.'

We do not see any very grave reason why the

suffragettes should not have the vote, except their tendency to revert to the methods of the hustings. Still less can we see why they should. And we certainly do not think that a sweeping alteration in the government of the country ought to be made without very grave reason indeed. England is not precisely a pleasant place to live in for those who have no money and no property, and changes seem mainly for the worse in that respect ; but we do know at present what we have to contend with, and, mistrusting small changes much, we mistrust great changes more. People whose weekly income barely feeds and houses them cannot afford to experiment in changes.

On the other hand, some grandiloquent anti-suffrage pamphlets that have been sent us amuse us almost as much as the suffragettes themselves. 'More trouble wi' them too, I s'pose,' Dave says. The names on the rival manifestos do not impress us in the least. Most of them we know nothing about, and don't want to. Far more, apparently, than the newspaper-reading classes, we ask for reasoning, not names. And that is the very thing that is not offered us, at any rate in language we can all understand. We are well assured that any party we help to put in power will work for its

own ends, not ours, until it wants us to help it into power a second time. If we had a suffragette Cabinet or a suffragette House of Lords, we should expect nothing of them except an attempt to make us act as they think proper, instead of their acting as we think proper. No doubt women will get the vote some day, when it is to the tactical advantage of one or other of the great parties to give it to them.

As for the suffragettes' pranks and bad behaviour, we do not approve, but we thank them for the sport provided. We are glad to see Governments that harass us with school inspectors, medical officers, policemen, so-called temperance reforms, and such-like, harassed in their turn. To our mind, the most shameful thing about the suffragettes' agitation is their special treatment in prison. If Mrs. Perring, who objects, both maternally and on principle, against having her children hit by anybody else, especially by schoolmasters, were to go and brawl in the town schools on that account, she would probably be sent to prison in the ordinary way, and would feel the separation from her husband and household, and from the children whose welfare prompted her to brawl, at least as much as the 'cultured lady'

suffragettes feel their separation from the friends and books that egged them on. There has always been, in practice, one law for the rich and another for the poor ; and now apparently there is a third for ladies who assert loudly enough that their bad behaviour was due to good intentions.

At the 'Cable and Anchor' we came across a picture of the suffragette with the dog-whip. 'Fine woman,' observed Dave. 'What's her s'posed to be doing ?'

'She's a suffragette,—getting into Parliament.'

'An' what be 'em going to do when they gets there? Why, nort for the likes o' us, same as they always has done. Parcel o' women! If men can't govern the country wi'out they, 'tis time for to pack up. Aye! 'tis better to look pretty and be nice. 'Tis the old way, an' 'tis the best way, an' it gets 'em their own way quicker, if they only know'd it. I dearly likes to see 'em wi' their rag out, thee's know ; but I an't got no patience wi' them as won't let a chap what's got up a meeting for the purpose speak and explain hisself.'

At bottom, the question is one of ideals,—namely, whether we shall give up the lady and domestic ideals, which have the strength of

tradition behind them, in favour of an untried political mud-splasher ideal for women. One of the most important parts of practical politics is, and is likely to remain, that of mud-splashing. The suffragettes have taken to it admirably. Hitherto we have had it as an aim to keep our womenfolk out of the dirty work, or at least not to add to that which already falls to their share. The domestic woman we are not likely to undervalue; or her power either. We are aware that not every woman by any means can find her lifework in house and family, in motherhood. But the mother type is the normal, and, though we would allow abnormal types their fling in every way possible, we would not alter the Constitution to suit them.

The lady is less useful. She requires so much propping, so much shelter, so much service, for her more ornamental existence. No doubt she has her function in society just as the road-sweeper and kitchenmaid have theirs. She has time and money to try experiments. She sets standards of conventional amenity which, however grotesque in the imitation, are of use in keeping other people up to their own standards. Comparatively unprofitable herself, she makes society



more elastic than a community of men and women, all hard at work, could be. We can do with the lady—we like her, in fact—so long as she sticks to her last. The suffragettes appear to be ladies who don't.

It is not that we are unacquainted with any suffragettes. Dave Perring had a very enjoyable conversation one day with a militant suffragette who in private life, if I may put it so, is altogether charming. Indeed, he did not realize that she was a suffragette. 'Who was her, then?' he asked. 'Her seems a nice lady.' When he heard that she had carried a 'Votes for Women' sandwich-board through the West End—'Well,' he said, 'who'd ha' thought thic? Her *looks* like a lady too.'

But the herrings have come into the bay, and herrings here are more important than suffragettes; and when the herrings come into the political bay, they will, we fancy, be found more important there too. Meanwhile, we have no very urgent objection to offer against votes for women as part and parcel of adult suffrage, except that their disappointment, then, is likely to be even greater than it is now. Mrs. Perring is more against it than we menfolk are.



### 3. THE POOR LAW REPORT

‘WHAT’s it all about, then, this here Poor Law buzz?’ Dave Perring asked; ‘I an’t heard nort o’it till now. What do ’em want to do wi’ us?’

That is the point: ‘What do *they* want to do with us?’ Not, what do we want to do with ourselves? Not, what do we, who have to live our life, think fit? It is pretty safe to say that the Poor Law Commission’s Report, which closely concerns every working-class family in the country (for none are far removed from starvation whose only stock-in-trade is themselves, and who have nothing to fall back upon when times are bad or health fails), will go into scarcely a single working household; and it could not be read if it did, both on account of its length and on account of its use of sociological jargon. If a homely summary could be put within reach of all, in every club,

reading-room, and public-house. . . . But that is too much to hope. Besides, no means exist of gathering together working-class opinions. Neither elections nor newspapers do it, and Labour representatives always go off on their own as soon as they are in a position to represent anything. In this house we have one of the summaries which have been issued in pamphlet form, together with the reports of *The Times* and of one or two other newspapers. We have read these and discussed them over meals until the children, with that superb indifference which they learn at school, stared and thought us mazed. Though we can only say, 'Seems so to us from those reports,' we have at any rate seen enough to make us admire the keen and careful spirit of the Commissioners ; enough to make us glory in their straight talk about workhouses and relief ; enough to make us hate many of their proposals, because of the one detestable thing on which their working depends.

'Let's reckon up what 'twould be for the likes o' us,' said Dave, when we had finished reading the reports. 'Take me. S'pose this here pain what I gets wi' hauling an' straining was to get so that I couldn't earn nort. What then?'

'Thee's forgot me,' Mrs. Perring remarked.

‘ I could bring thee in summut if I had to go out to work.’

‘ Well, s’pose thee wast took wi’ the gout from high living or too much washing-day. ’Tis the workhouse now, an’ that’s the end o’ee; but they’m going to do away wi’ thic. What’d I do?’

‘ You’d get doctored free by the public health people, or by club-doctors or dispensaries that you’d paid into, and you’d be maintained at home so long as you kept your house sanitary and lived healthily.’

‘ Us knows the worth o’ the doctoring that you don’t pay for, an’ a lot that you do.—An’ how be they to know how I keeps my house?’

‘ They’d inspect you. They’d say : “ If you take our help, you must put up with our inspection.” ’

‘ Inspect you ! Aye ! That’s all they minds. Pretty turnout o’it to hae ’spectors always buzzing round thee ! I’d like to see what they as sends ’em would do if *they* had to live in a crib like this here an’ bring up a family on my earnings, for all this house is better that most. Ought to be ; I pays more for it.—An’ s’pose I fell out o’ work ? ’

‘ They’d have labour exchanges to tell you in

what part of the country men of your trade were wanted. . . .’

‘That’s all right ; only there’s lots o’ good men, thee’s know, that’d rather do nort an’ go short than leave their home an’ friends. Can’t blame ’em.—An’ if they couldn’t get me a job thic way ?’

‘They’d put you in a certain class of unemployed and treat you according. If you’re a good man out of a regular job they’d keep you going in work and cash till you got your proper work ; if you’re a casual, a fairly good man but unskilled, they’d send you to a labour colony and keep your family while you were away ; and if you’re a loafer, workshy, or a drunkard, they’ll make you go to a labour colony and compel you to work.’

‘How be ’em to know what sort o’ man I be ?’

‘They’ll keep papers showing your history. . . .’

‘Aye ! for the devil knows who to look at. An’ how be they to know my history ?’

‘They’d inspect and inquire.’

‘An’ so they may, chattering to the neighbours, like they ’spectors do, an’ telling ’em dree-ha’p’orth o’ lies in exchange for dree-penn’orth o’ tittle-tattle about thee ! They ’spectors always makes more mischief than they ’spects.’

‘They propose even, when they relieve anybody,

to inquire into his family's circumstances and make *them* contribute. . . .'

'An' a pretty parcel o' lies they'll get, an' well they'll deserve it too! How'd 'em like their own families 'spected? You'd think the likes o' us was consignments o' rotten fish.'

Mrs. Perring put in her word: 'Look what the National Cruelty 'spector did for Mrs. Sherwill. 'Twas a shame, I reckon. Her's so hard-working a woman as anybody, an' clean too, an' her's often and often gone short for to give they kids o' hers enough. They'm so happy as any chil'ern I knows of, for all they'm poor. Well, somebody tells up a parcel o' chatter an' down comes the 'spector 'long wi' a policeman. In they goes, wi'out any warrant as I've heard of. The 'spector asks her if her's married to her man. Says Mrs. Sherwill, "Do 'ee think I'd be bothered wi' a family o' chil'ern like mine if I wasn't!" But her refused to show 'en her marriage lines, not if her burnt 'em or went to prison for't. Up goes the 'spector an' turns over all the bedclothes an' feels the beds wi' his hands, like so. *They* was clean, he said. Down he comes again, an' turns up the chil'ern's hair, an' pokes his nose into cupboards an' everywhere; an' when Mr. Sherwill, coming home, asks 'en what he



wanted there, he says, "None o' your cheek, my lad !" Didst ever hear the like o'it? And, o' course, everybody round about know'd to once that her'd had the 'spector in her house 'long wi' the policeman, an' *that* don't make it no easier for her to rub along. There's no telling what they 'sceptors won't do, once you lets 'em start. I tells 'em to clear out pretty quick, but there's many as they frightens into it. No doubt the National Cruelty means well, an' they may do some good in rough cases, but taking it all ways, they does more harm than good, I reckon.'

'Course they do,' Dave added. 'How can 'em help o'it? Be 'em God for to know by looking round what you deserves, an' what's in your heart, an' how you've a-tried an' tried—or an't tried—an' what you've had to contend with? 'Twould puzzle God Hisself to tell, some o'it as I've see'd in my experience, an' I'm sure they sort never can't. Rogues can always find a way to fool they 'sceptors, an' honest folk, as looks what they is, they gets caught ; for none o' us be perfect, thee's know, an' thee casn't be thy brother's keeper.'

In many details the Commissioners' proposals are more kindly and thoughtful than any that have been made before ; but to what end, since



the general schemes of both majority and minority are dependent on inspection for their proper working? No sooner does the Commission come to handgrips with poverty itself than out pops an inspector, like a Jack-in-the-box. And not only that; voluntary charity is to be thoroughly re-organized and put on an inquisitorial basis. In the sweat of thy brow, and under the eyes of inspectors, shalt thou eat thy bread! Must no one give without being certain of his money's-worth? Can no one receive without being demoralized? Inspection means the judgment of one class by the standards of another; the teaching of people how to live under circumstances of which the teachers have had no personal experience. If carried through, it means also the forcing of the ideals of one class upon another class, and nothing is so demoralizing as that. It is mainly by confusing class-ideals that elementary education, as we know it, has been able to do the harm which the Commission admits it has done. The Report proposes that a higher grade, a better-educated type of inspector should be appointed. To what end, again? The semi-educated inspector, only a cut above the inspected in position, cannot but be at heart an enemy of, and un-

sympathetic towards, the class he is always afraid of falling back into himself. And the educated inspector will be at the mercy of his educated nerves. If he hears the noise and language we don't mind, if he smells the smells that don't hurt us, if he sees the food we enjoy flung higgledy-piggledy on the table, and the house when it is up to neck, before the one woman who has to do all the work has had time to tidy up,—he will condemn us because his nerves will be offended. That we are able to put up with those things is our strength, not our weakness. The Commission has judged its proposed officials by itself. We are not sure—who can be?—and we are far from wishing to cast slurs on the proposals of a Commission which has criticized and spoken with such courage ; but our impression is that the twin-sisters who love us so—Destitution and Disease—will in the long run weed out the fit from the unfit, the deserving from the undeserving, the hopeless from the hopeful, more fairly, and more mercifully too, than a blight of inspectors let loose upon the land.

‘ Let ’em gie us our chance,’ says Dave, ‘ an’ leave us to fight it out for ourselves.’ Give us a fair chance, he means, of floating or sinking ;

stop pushing us under ; and let us go forward on our own lines, in our own time. Mankind in the mass moves very slowly, and cannot be hustled with impunity. Sociology and efficiency are right enough in their places, but for actual dealing with human beings, patience and charity are still of more avail ; patience, always patience, though it is hard to be patient when poor creatures are brought, or bring themselves, to starvation ; and charity that suffereth long and is kind, because it knows that in the end no man's judgment of another is worth much. How can it be ?

#### 4. THE CHILDREN'S CHARTER

‘OFF to bed you goes! I bain’t going to hae ’ee running about outdoors this time o’ night, an’ I can’t hae ’ee down here while I be ironing. Get along, or I’ll knock your head off, I will?’

‘Git ’ome! You can’t! If you’m cruel to us any more you’ll hae the bobby after ’ee. ’Tis up in the Post Office window, an’ Miss Penley-Jones says if our fathers an’ mothers be cruel to us we got to tell, an’ her’ll see about it, and have ’ee sent to chokey.’

‘Cruel to ’ee! Up over, or . . .’ Mrs. Perring raised the hand that so often rises and so seldom falls to hurt. With a last dip into the sugar-basin the children ran off to bed.

‘What do ’em mean?’ asked Dave Perring. ‘What’s the buzz now? What’s Miss Penley-Jones been telling o’em about?’

‘The new Children Act, I expect—the Act

that prevents any one sending a kid for cigarettes or taking children into public-houses.'

'Thic rot! But that don't say nort about cruelty or bearing tales.'

'Yes it does. It says all sort of things. They call it the Children's Charter. Listen to this: "If anybody overlays a baby, and it can be proved they went to bed in liquor, they shall be deemed to have neglected the infant in a manner likely to cause injury to its health. . . ."'

'Do 'em call killing it injuring its health, then?'

'That's what the Act says. They're liable to a hundred pounds' fine or two years' hard labour.'

'They'll hae some difficulty to prove thic,' said Mrs. Perring. 'And when a baby's overlaid by accident they'll be sure to try and bring it in drunkenness, an' wi' liars enough they'll prove it, whether or no. 'Tisn't many kids killed that way out of the whole number.'

'Letting them sleep in cradles is what they want to encourage.'

'I should like to see the likes o' they work hard all day and then hae a kid squalling in a cradle all night, an' hae to keep on getting out of bed to 'en, for to gie 'en the breast, and taking

o'en out into the cold. Babies sleeps quieter 'long wi' their mothers, an' they thrives better, too, I believe.'

'And if a child under seven burns itself at a fire without a fireguard the person in charge of it is liable to a ten pounds' fine.'

'An' what about when you'm obliged to take away the fireguard for to cook and clean up?' asked Mrs. Perring.

'An' what,' inquired Dave, 'about the people as can't afford fireguards wi'out going short of summut—kids going short o' grub, most likely? Three or four shillings for a fireguard is a lot out o' a working-man's week's pay. They don't count that, I s'pose. Besides which, you ain't fined for not having a fireguard; they can't tell that; you'm fined when the child's burnt. You'm fined for bad luck, as if the worry an' sorrow an' cost o'it wasn't fine enough.'

'And you're fined if a child asks people for money, whether it sells anything or not; and nobody who begs may have a child with them.'

'Well, I reckon they ought to put a stop to they beggars what hires a child for to beg with. But your own chil'ern—do 'em mean to say that I can't send one o' mine to pick flowers and sell



'em for to get hisself a pair o' boots or summut to eat?'

'Seems so, now. And nobody can take care of a child for more than two days for payment without being registered and inspected.'

'Some o'em wants inspecting, most of all they there schools and institutions.'

'They're excepted.'

'Aye! course they be. They got money—wi' begging for it—an' people to speak up for 'em. The likes o' us an't. There's many a child 'll hae to go to the workhouse as the result of thic regulation, an' 'tis a bad home as is wuss'n the workhouse. I've a-see'd many a case, thee's know, where people took a child for pay, and then, when the pay come'd to an end, like it does often, they kept the child on for nort, or half, 'cause they was grow'd fond o'it. But they won't do it if they got to be registered and inspected. Most times the pay don't pay for the child. I'd take one meself, p'raps, if it hadn't got nowhere else to go to, but I be hanged if I would for to hae 'spectors messing round about my home!'

'Finally, in that part of the Act, they say that parents and people in charge, like teachers, still have the right to administer punishment.'

‘Oh, they an’t took thic away then! No doubt they’ll bring that in as cruelty, if they wants to. Not that I hold wi’ whacking chil’ern, an’ I don’t do it meself, an’ I certainly don’t hold wi’ teachers whacking o’em. What wi’ schooling an’ the like, kids be getting cheeky enough, an’ you’ll nearly always find when there’s trouble in a family that ’tis outsiders making o’it.’

‘Then the Act goes on to cigarettes. . . .’

‘Thic foolishness! I ’ouldn’t gie much for a boy that didn’t smoke one if he wanted to, policeman or no policeman. Much better to try an’ make the kids not want to, ’stead o’ turning smoking into what they kids ’ll think a jolly fine lark, an’ running ’em into the arms of the policeman, which don’t never do ’em no good. Is there ort more to thic Act?’

‘It gives a list of children liable to be sent to industrial schools and reformatories, and says that parents, if they can, must be made to pay for the children while they’re there.’

‘They that takes the kids away against the parents’ wish, they ought to be made to pay for their upkeep while they’ve got ’em.’

‘And it directs that children must be tried in

separate courts and kept apart from grown-up prisoners.'

'So it ought to be ; they drags our kids there when they'd only tan their own kids at home for the same thing—if they did so much as that.'

'And children may not be sentenced to penal servitude or to be hanged.'

'That's no more than they ought to ha' said years ago.'

'And when an entertainment is given to more than a hundred children, it has got to be seen that the place is safe in case of fire and so on.'

'Thiccy's right, too. They don't give many entertainments to chil'ern unless they wants something out o'em—religion or teetotal, or cheering, or summut, if 'tish't money—an' 'tis only proper they should hae to make the place safe.'

'Also there's the part of the Act that they've got the notices up about, in at the "Cable and Anchor." We mayn't give liquor to children under five unless the doctor orders it or in case of sickness, and no child, except the publican's, may go into a place where drink is served.'

'Aye!' snorted Dave. 'As if they'd hear worse in a bar than they'd hear out and about, or from other chil'ern to school. School's where

they learns foul language. Pretty thing, if us can't look after our kids so well in a public-house as anywhere else, but got to leave 'em outside, in the rain, p'raps, or else leave 'em at home wi' nobody to look after 'em ! Nice when you'm out for the day wi' your family, not to be able to go into a public-house for ort ! Do they as makes these Acts ever go into bars, or do 'em drink at home ? One 'ould think they was sinful places. As for giving a child a sip o' liquor, no doubt some people overdoes it, but I an't never see'd that chil'ern, what had a drop o' what was going, be bigger drunkards than them what wasn't allowed to touch o'it ; and publicans' chil'ern, what's always about in bars, don't turn out any worse than teetotalers' chil'ern. They kids us see'd to France, they took their wine, didn' 'em ? Be they bigger drunkards over there than us be ? 'Tis just the way to drive 'em into drink, to make a forbidden mystery o'it. Can tell they that makes these Acts don' know chil'ern. Is that all o'it ?'

'That's pretty well all that affects our sort, except the general clauses at the beginning about cruelty. . . .'

'Cruelty ! Aye ! I s'pose if they'd heard the

missis here say her'd knock the kids' heads off, they'd say her was a cruel mother, for all 'tis only a manner o' speaking, an' they there kids knows it too. Chil'ern's Charter, do 'em call it? . . . Mischief-makers' opportunity, I say! Some o'it's all right, but half the time they that makes these laws don' know nort 't all 'bout it. Us bain't no crueller to our chil'ern on the whole than they be—a jolly sight easier wi' 'em in some ways, an' we has to hae 'em about 'long wi' us, kicking up their buzz, all the time, day an' night. They don't reckon what the likes o' us has to contend wi'; that'd be too much trouble; they flings laws and fines at our head instead. They don' know what 'tis for a woman, like missis here, to hae a houseful o' kids. "Pretty little dears!" they says because 'tis chil'ern; and "Poor little darlings!" if there's ort wrong; but you'd find that them as says it wouldn't look after 'em theirselves single-handed, an' do all the house-work too, not for a day, n'eet for an hour nuther. Missis, her's got to let some o'it slide sometimes, an' 'tis a poor tally if her's got to suffer for what her can't help. Nine time out o' ten 'tis they as makes these laws what breaks 'em first, only they gets off by some means or other. I dearly loves



chil'ern, an' I don't see why they shouldn't be kept a little bit thereafter, but all the same, I reckon that them as can afford nurses to look after 'em an' take 'em off their hands ought to have double punishment. That's never been thought of, I s'pose. They'm just so cruel in their way. T'other day a young gen'leman was telling me how he'd been sent in for examinations what ruined his health so that he'll never be the same again, the doctor says. Which do 'ee think is wuss: to break up a youngster wi' examinations for all his life, or to beat 'en black an' blue (what'll heal up), or to take 'en into a pub? Thic chap's parents won't get punished. They'll get praised for educating o'en.

'The Act's the same for everybody, they says, but it bears on the likes o' us; 'tis a hit at our ways and a slur cast on us. 'Tis *us* that an't got servants for to look after the kids, an' keep 'em away from the fire, an' walk 'em up an' down at night. 'Tis *us* what goes into bars, so much for the company as the drink, an' an't got nobody to leave the kids in charge of. 'Tis *us* what wants to send kids to the baccy shop 'cause us an't got nobody else to send, n'eet time to go ourselves. 'Tis *our* kids what an't got private grounds an'



gardens to smoke in out o' the policeman's sight. 'Tis *our* kids an't got nowhere to play in, harmless like, wi'out the bobby chasing 'em out o'it an' into mischief. They tries to drive us all into the policeman's lock-up wi' their rules an' regulations, an' it don't make it any better for the kids, that, not in the end—do it, Missis ?'

'Makes it a damn sight wuss !' replied Mrs. Perring, with conviction.

In short, it seems to us that the Children Act is essentially undemocratic, and therefore we look upon a large part of it as a gross and stupid insult, the outcome of sentimentality and ignorance, engineered by well-meaning busybodies, and aimed by those, who are supposed to represent us, at a class which is no worse, all things considered, than any other. Why they can't help us without also insulting and harassing us, we should like to know. Not that way is the world to be righted in a day, nor will the birthrate be kept up among steady-going people by making children a greater worry and expense than they are bound to be already.

## 5. EDUCATION

BETTER to say in the first place that about the religious education controversy we don't care two pins. Some few people, no doubt, feel very earnestly in the matter, but in the main the controversy seems to us to be made up of political strife, dog-in-the-manger talk, and grabs for power on the part of spiritual busybodies. Secular education does not shock us. Differences of creed do not trouble us. What concerns us here, in a working-man's family, is how the education, to which the children are bound to submit, is going to help them to live; to earn their bread-and-cheese, and to lead useful, happy, *fit*y lives.

Not long ago our tea-table became an indignation meeting on the subject of education. (We use the word in its popular sense, meaning education as we know it.) The girls are supposed to be taught sewing at school. They take their

own material and make it up. On that day one of them brought back home what had been intended for a pillow-slip. Mrs. Perring held it up. 'What d'you call you've made of this?' she asked.

'Pillow-slip . . .' replied the child.

'An' if you shakes the pillow in like so?'

'Twill slip out,' said the child.

'Aye! an' so I reckon 'twill when you leaves the pillow-slip open both ends. Didn' you know better'n that? Didn' your teacher tell 'ee?'

'Teacher an't got to show us, not wi' what us takes ourselves. Her'd get into a row if her did. 'Tis against the rules.'

'Rules! What's her paid for, then? *I* don't buy calico for 'ee to spoil at their sewing-lessons. They *won't* teach 'ee better, an' I *can't* teach 'ee better meself, 'cause I'd hae the 'spector round to see where you was to, if I kept 'ee home for sewing. Pretty thing!'

'Thee casn' tell the rights o'it from chil'ern's tales,' said Dave. 'P'raps her teacher hadn't time. No doubt they teachers got summut to contend wi' too. All the same, I can't see that they schools does the kids a bit o' good. Kids bain't a bit better than they was when I was a

boy ; they'm wuss, not so helpful n'eet so sensible, for all they'm better scholars in some ways. I knows, 'cause I've a-watched it. They don't teach 'em nort useful, an' they puts 'em off learning ort themselves.'

I remarked to Dave that he was talking like a Poor Law Commissioner, fetched out our summary of the Report, and read aloud the strong paragraphs on elementary education : ' In the first place our expensive Elementary Education System [costing £20,000,000 annually] is having no effect on poverty, it is not developing self-reliance or forethought in the characters of the children, and is in fact persuading them to become clerks rather than artisans. . . . '

'Aye !' said Dave. 'That's it. They wants to be gen'lemen afore they'm men, an' wear starch-collars, an' hae the likes o' us to touch our caps to 'em and call 'em *Sir* ; an' they bain't no happier after that. 'Tis only a gyte [habit] o' ours, thee's know, thic cap-touching, an' fools we be to do it, for they'm nuther men nor gen'lemen, they sort. The girls, they wants to play the piano afore they can do ort 't all about the house. An' 'tis this here education what do's it, sure 'nuff. They learns it to school, an' thee casn' avoid it, 'cause

thee't bound to send 'em or be fined, w'er thee's got more sense or not. The likes o' us has kids, an' toils an' moils for to bring 'em up fitty, for the likes o' they to play the fool with.—What do they Commission people propose to do for to better it ?'

'They say that the children ought to be kept at school till they're fifteen. . . .'

'Fifteen! Why they keeps 'em there two years too long as 'tis, I reckon. I don't say a few o'em don't rise through it; but they clever sort 'd rise anyhow, wi'out forcing, if the chance was offered 'em. For the heft [greater part] of the likes o' us 'tis different. You may learn summut to school, or you may not; precious little o'it's any use; but I reckon you learns manlihood an' womanlihood after you leaves school, an' the sooner you begins to learn thic, the better. 'Tisn't what you learns to school as helps 'ee, not wi' the likes o' us, so long as you can read an' write an' reckon a bit, an' speak up for yourself; 'tis experience—seeing life an' what 'tis like, an' thee casn' see too much o'it too early. I tell thee, if you got to live your life wi' your nose to the grindstone, like most o' us has, the sooner you learns to put it there the better. You never can't



if you don't start when you'm young. 'Tisn't likely, an' 'tis cruel hard to be forced to start it late.'

'Then you agree with the Commission :—"It is not in the interests of the country to produce by our system of education a dislike of manual work and a taste for clerical and for intermittent work, when the vast majority of those so educated must maintain themselves by manual labour. . . ."'

'Aye! who wouldn't if they'd see'd it like I have?'

'All the same,' said Mrs. Perring, 'I hold they continuation schools be good things. You can learn a lot at they if you'm minded. What wants is for the kids to learn schooling and learn working all to the same time, not one after the other. Proper working, I means. Half the schooling they has now would be enough to teach 'em all what they learns, if they was well taught, an' the other half the time they ought to be at some sort o' work, not for the value of what they earns—though that's something an' it bucks 'em up no end to earn a shilling or two proper like—but for to teach 'em *how* to work.'

'Well, the Commission says that "the provision of technical instruction after leaving school



should be increased," and it wants to stop boys going into blind-alley occupations, like errand-boy, where there's no promotion, and when they're too old they're left without a job at all.'

'But,' said Dave, 'a boy can learn to make hisself handy in a hunderd ways as errant-boy, if he likes to try. I did. An' he's out an' about an' can see what's what afore he makes up his mind which trade he's going in for. An' what do 'em mean by technical instruction after leaving school?'

'Special schools where they teach a boy a trade.'

'That's all right enough. But I've a-told thee, an' I tell 'ee again, 't isn't no good trying to teach a boy a trade if thee hasn't taught him how to work. There's so many clever tradesmen among they tramps as there is men that can't do nort. An' why for? 'Cause they an't never been taught how to work reg'lar afore they was taught their trade, or, wi' some on 'em, 'cause they came to misery what they couldn't help, an' give'd up. The fust thing you got to learn is to be able to work. After that they can teach 'ee ort, or you can pretty nearly teach yourself if you'm sharp an' keeps your eyes open. As 'tis, they

teaches 'em everything to they schools, 'cept how to learn, an' all their teaching goes for wuss than nort. 'Tis how to make use o' what you learn is the thing. Our sort o' people knows that well enough, but the likes o' they there educated people, they won't listen to us. They spoils our chil'ern, aye ! an' at our expense ; for 'tis us pays in the long run. They has their way, 'cause we can't stop 'em, an' 'tis us suffers. Hasn't never see'd it afore ? I have.'

On the subject of education, indeed, the Poor Law Commissioners seem themselves to have run into a blind alley. First they find our education to be wrong ; then they propose to increase it. They are of opinion that 'the present system of elementary education is not adapted to the wants of an industrial community,' and at the same time they would force the children under its influence for a still longer period. Schools are bad. Remedy : more school. And the contradiction is to be solved by 'some revision of the present curriculum.' Blessed word, *curriculum* ! always in the mouths of bad teachers, because it sounds so large and means so little, for, given good teachers, 'self-reliance and forethought,' the power of thinking, can be developed in children on almost

any curriculum. How many times already has the curriculum been changed in vain? What wants altering is the whole spirit of elementary education, and that the Commissioners will find a far tougher job than reforming the Boards of Guardians. 'Twice one are two, twice two are four . . .' parrot-fashion, and 'Tommy, don't yer wish yer wuz a gen'leman?' are the two characteristics of our present educational system. It offers the neatest possible example of the folly of trying to force upon one class the standards and ideals of another. The result is plain now the mistake has been made. According to the Poor Law Commission, 'a cause lying at the root of much existing unemployment is the lack of proper education.' Had they said 'too much improper education,' they would have been still nearer the mark.

We have heard education called the cruellest thing ever forced upon the poor. That may or may not be. Many things are forced upon the poor. But it does seem to us that education is the biggest fraud ever forced upon us; and the most dangerous, too; for it has been held forth so persistently and so loudly as a cure-all that even the poor themselves have been very largely deceived.

## 6. POOR-CLASS HOUSES

STRICTLY speaking, old Mother Parsons ought not to have been in the Perrings' kitchen at all, and very well she knew it. Although the children had some time since gone off to school, Dave and Mrs. Perring were still at table. The dirty dinner-things were piled up on one side (there is nowhere else to put them), and on the other side, with a little clear space in front of them and their chairs shoved comfortably back, Dave and his wife were sitting on for a while over their after-dinner cups of tea. If there had been a bareness in the land, if they had been going short, if, say, they had had no meat for dinner or no sugar in their tea, Mrs. Parsons would have spied it out, and would, of course, have spread the news. Hence the unspoken rule which makes it bad manners to go into other people's kitchens during a meal. If they have to go hungry,

give them at least a chance of not letting it be known.

Mrs. Parsons compromised with custom by squatting down on the straight-backed chair nearest the door, so that in a sense she was absent from the meal though present in the company; and as soon as possible she drew attention away from herself to the misdeeds of some one else.

‘Here we be, feeding our faces,’ Dave was saying. ‘Hastn’t got no more work to do, Missis? Artn’t going to make a move to-day?’

‘No, course I bain’t,’ Mrs. Perring replied. ‘*I* an’t never got no work to do! But I bain’t going to move herefrom till I’ve had my hour to dinner. What’s think—that I can work wi’out a moment to meself from time I gets up till ’tis time to go to bed? I reckon I should pretty soon be wore out at thic rate, an’ then thee’t hae to do it all thyself, or look round for another.’

‘Aye! so would, me ol’ stocking.’

‘When I come’d in,’ said Mrs. Parsons, ‘who should I see but that young Mrs. Trigg—Jim Trigg’s wife—going out for the afternoon, like her do.’

‘Her an’t got a parcel o’ kids,’ said Mrs. Perring, ‘for to keep her fixed in house. Her’s



only got thic one what her takes out 'long wi' her.'

'But I reckon 'tis a bit *too* much, always out and about like her is. *I* never couldn't do it. The district lady, her asked me t'other day w'er Beaty Trigg went out to work, seeing her couldn't never find her in, not in the afternoon. An' when I told her how 'twas Beaty Trigg's habit for to lock the door an' go for a walk, her *was* surprised. "I should never have thought it," her said, "neglecting her house like that. If her's got time for to be out every day, her's got time for to get some work to do." That's what the district lady said.'

'Aye,' remarked Dave, 'no doubt her did. Just what the likes o' her would say, an' fools some of our sort be for holding in 'long wi' 'em. When they sees a woman outside her house they calls her "Gossip!" and "Gad-about!" And if they comes into your house at the wrong time, when 'tis all up an' down with cleaning, then they says, "Oh, what dirty, untidy people!" Yet they says us wants fresh air. An' gossip don't mean everything in the way of neglect of house-work, though I'll admit it don't look the same for a woman, whose place is in her home, to



be standing about outside, gossiping. But it does 'em good sometimes, I reckon, for to chatter, like us be here now. 'Tis the only break some o'em ever gets. And some wi' the most chackle, when they'm up for it, is the best women to work. A woman's got to suit the convenience of her own time, not nobody else's. Her's only got one pair of hands for to do all o'it. Yet they that's got servants for to do their work for 'em, an' nice houses, they'm the ones that comes along an' chatters, and some of our own sort upholds 'em. Jim Trigg's wife was so nice a maid as ever stepped. Always kep' herself nice an' quiet. Happens I've been in her house. 'Twas so bright an' clean as a new pin. But there! *her* can do it. Her's only got thic one. Time her has half-a-dozen kids; *they'll* tie her down an' tame her. . . .'

'Here's luck, they will!' Mrs. Perring agreed. 'And make her stand still to look at her work for to see which end o'it her'll get at first.'

'Kids 'll come,' Dave went on. 'They do, don't 'em, Missis? But as for thic district woman, what goes round laying grocery tickets and tracts like eggs, an' then cackling 'bout it, how was her to know Jim Trigg's wife hadn't been working

her hands raw since daylight? I tell 'ee, they don't know the nature o'it, nor never won't, proper. What's the matter wi' 'em is, that there isn't no slaves nowadays.

'I believe everybody tries to do their utmost one time or other, only they gets wearied out wi' it all, and some o'em gives up. That's my opinion about people in poor-class houses. Course I knows there's some people wouldn't keep things fitty, not if they had houses so big as mansions. But, Lord! if a woman didn't neglect things sometimes, an' let 'em rip, for to take a bit of time off to enjoy herself, her might just so well be dead. And her can't take five minutes off wi'out neglecting something, 'cause there's always summut waiting to be done. 'Tis surprising to me how poor people rubs along an' looks like they do. "Brings it on theirselves," they says, don't 'em, when some poor devil has to go short, or turn out on the street, or gets sent to chokey for next to nort? That may be. All the same, 'tis a wonder they does so well as they do. They says you've only got a little place to keep tidy, but they don't consider you an't got no servants for to help 'ee, an' how crowding-in makes work 'cause you an't got nowhere to put nort. They don't look after

working-class streets same as they do t'others, though the rates is paid just the same, I s'pose. They'm left rough. If we was to put out stinking ash-buckets an' leave 'em there, they'd kick up a fuss, yet they leaves drain-traps choked for days an' weeks. Us ain't s'posed to have no noses when 'tis their fault, only when 'tis ours. I reckon they ought to look after the back parts of towns same as the front. More people lives there. An' they'm more neglected. There isn't no encouragement given for to keep things clean. They only jaws an' summonses 'ee when you don't. You look at the mud in poor-class streets. That's all got to be trod in house, just when a woman's been down on her knees an' washed it all, most likely. Then her has to do it all over again, or leave it dirty. I tell 'ee 'tis enough for to break the heart of any woman what starts wi' a pride in her house. . . .

'The chil'ern does it running in an' out, when you an't got no back way. 'Tis bound to make a difference when there's a lot of kids, no matter who says it don't.'

'Difference !' echoed Mrs. Perring. 'Why, nort at all's the same. I mind when I used to sit up till twelve or one at night, doing sewing till

my eyes giv'd out ; an' now I can't do it ; an' don't try ; an' they'm nort the worse for it that I sees, only a bit raggeder sometimes : an' people chatters. . . .'

'I don't say you bain't just so happy wi' chil'ern, 'cause you be, an' happier ; but still, you can't do the same what you'd like.'

'You can't get out, for one thing.'

'An' 'tis washing, scouring, cooking, cleaning, an' yawling all day long. If only us had more convenience, like, for to bring 'em up in. . . . You take the missis, there. If her hadn't had the courage for to keep on, day an' night, where should us lot ha' been? Yet I've a-come'd in 'fore now an' feeled sick wi' it—fair sick o'it, I've been, for to see it like it. You look at our kitchen in the morning—boots about, soap about, water about, cooking about, the missis there jawing an' the kids chattering an' scrapping like kids will ; an' that's what you got to swallow down for breakfast, all in one room. That's what us got to put up wi' w'er us'd like things better or no.'

'Well,' Mrs. Perring explained, 'the kids have got to get ready for school, anyhow. You can't send 'em upstairs to wash, 'cause they wouldn't

do it proper. An' who'd empty their washing water an' clean up their mess they'd make? An' 'tishn't no good sending 'em to strip outside where they'd catch cold. An' you got to keep on chawling at 'em for to make 'em do things proper, when 'twouldn't be half the trouble for to take an' do it yourself, only that wouldn't be no training for they. If us had a better back-house, a proper scullery like . . .'

'There's plenty got much worse houses 'n us got,' said Dave. 'You take a country labourer wi' only one downstairs room an' no backledge at all, an' not even a proper oven to cook in; an' there's tools in one corner an' spuds an' coal in another, an' a steaming washtub in t'other corner, an' chicken food in another, and everything wet an' muddy an' up to neck. . . . What comfort is there for a man in that? 'Tis a wonder to me they don't all o'em steer for the nearest pub. Yet lots o'em is better than maidens for doing housework an' helping their wives.

'When you got a family you wants room. Crowding a lot in together all means extra work. And so does a house too big. What's lacking most of all in poor-class houses is convenience. They'm built ignorant like o' what 'tis to live in



'em. Many an' many a time I've a-see'd disturbances in families, all for want of having room an' convenience for to live together. I reckon working people wants the most careful-built houses of anybody, 'cause they got most to do for themselves an' least to do it on ; but all the likes o' us can get is bettermost houses what's come down an' got out of repair, or else jerry-built, what's all outside show an' an't got nothing at all to hand inside, 'cept the bare walls and ceilings that tumbles about your head. I reckon every working-man's house ought to have a kitchen and two upstairs rooms—'t isn't no good to have extra rooms downstairs what you can't afford to light a fire in—an' not no coal-house in the kitchen, which is dirty and wasteful—and a back way to come in through, and plenty of back-house wi' a copper in it. . . .'

'That there's the most convenientest thing of all, I reckon,' interrupted Mrs. Perring warmly.

'They'm making a public wash-house for they cottages up-street,' Mrs. Parsons remarked.

'I don't hold wi' 'em,' said Mrs. Perring, with decision. 'You has your day to wash, and then, first thing, somebody an't finished ; an' one 'll come an' chatter, an' then another : "How soon 'll you be finished—'cause I wants to get done early?"'



I've a-see'd thic sort of spree. Give me a wash-house of me own for to get your washing done reg'lar.'

'That's it,' Dave rejoined. 'That's the sort of thing they there people don't understand ; they'm too ignorant ; an' us got to make the best us can of *their* mistakes. As for the landlords—they'm always on the grumble, an' says their houses don't pay, an' lets 'em out of repair so's they bain't fit for to keep cattle in ; but I takes partic'lar notice that if you gets money from your club an' offers to buy your house that they says don't pay, then they won't sell, an' says you can shift if you don't like it, an' ten to one rises your rent. The little landlords is worse 'n any—them that's got two or three houses and expects to live on 'em, an' an't got the money for to keep 'em up proper. I reckon they lives on their tenants more 'n on their houses. Proper bloodsuckers they be, an' they can't help o'it ; but they didn't ought to have houses, I say, if they can't afford for to keep 'em up.

'All the same, you can't hardly blame 'em. They've mostly worked an' saved hard 'nuff to get their bit o' property, as they calls it. 'Tis a big affair, I tell 'ee, for to work out all these here

little things—a sight more complicated than people thinks. But 'tis true what I says ; there's many a man an' woman's house have drove 'em wrong, an' nort but that. You can't alter it : you'm catched. You an't got nothing for to fall back on, an' they knows it. They talks about home an' family when the home isn't fit for to live in, an' a family makes it worse. And then they turns up their noses at 'ee 'cause, being poor, you can't be no otherwise.'

'Some people,' said Mrs. Parsons, by way of revenge because for once she had not been able to do all the talking, 'some people bain't never satisfied.'

'Why should 'em be? How can 'em be?' was Dave's parting shot.

## 7. PUBLIC-HOUSES

DAVE PERRING is anything but a drunkard. He has had in his time a few famous fuddles—‘when we was all jolly together’—and he enjoys recalling how nearly on one or two occasions he escaped being locked up. But, as he says, ‘I never an’t made a habit o’it. I goes into a public-house when I’m up for it an’ got the money in my pocket, an’ I can go wi’out it when I’m minded, which is mostly, an’ not feel the want o’it.’ Once, when he hurt himself, the doctor wanted him to promise that he would drink nothing at all till he was well. Dave refused. He felt it to be a move against his freedom. Therefore, instead, he made an evening of it, and was taken home with a ‘Here thee a’t, Missis! Here’s thy husband! Shall us carry ’en up over for ’ee? Woa, my beauty! Don’ ’ee kick, else us’ll let ’ee drop?’ And he got well just the same.

What he drinks he holds to be his own business, so long as he does his work, avoids debt, and harms nobody. He is rather old-fashioned. He believes in personal liberty. He thinks it outweighs its risks.

One evening he was having his glass at the 'King's Arms,' and asking the barmaid if she wouldn't like to go for a walk with him, when Bob Partman, the baker, turned round to him and said, 'If you want to have another turn-out at the "Blue Light"—d'you mind that time?—eh, Dave?—ten years ago, must be—well, you'd better hurry up. They're going to close it.'

'What for?' asked Dave. 'Has ol' Knocky Taylor made his fortune, then?'

'Knocky Taylor's half off his head about it. They're going to oppose his place and the "Waggoner" as well.'

At once Dave Perring was up in arms. 'What for?' he repeated. 'They'm both respectable pubs, though they bain't very up-to-date like; and Bill Smee an' Knocky Taylor's so nice landlords as you'd wish to go into their houses. What have *they* done?'

''Tisn't that. There's nothing, they says, against the way the houses are conducted. They're

opposing the licences on the ground that they ain't wanted.'

'How the hell can that be? Not wanted—when two men makes a living in those two houses! *They* don't want 'em; that's what 'tis; 'cause they'm working-men's houses, kept by the likes of a fellow's self—men what can't defend theirselves proper, an' an't got the money for to hire anybody to speak up for 'em. Why don't 'em make a start by shutting up some rich people's hotels or the wine merchants' shops where they buys in their wine an' spirits by the case? They says they places is wanted, don't 'em? That is, *they* wants 'em; an' they don't trouble what *us* wants. Don't they sort never drink a drop too much? Course they do! Only the difference is, they an't got to go to a pub for to get it, and if they do they has the rivets for to hire a cab to take 'em home. 'Tis like thic Licensing Act, what the Lords chucked out; where they was going to send plain-clothes policemen into all the clubs, rich men's an' working-men's alike, and 'twas to be the same for all—so they said. Can't 'ee see it—the policeman going into one o' they there big gen'lemen's clubs? *I* can. "Good evening, sir. Fine evening, sir.



No, sir, thank you. Mustn't drink on duty, sir. Well, sir, 'tis a cold evening outside. Good health, sir ! My best respects. Fine liquor, this. Good-night, gentlemen." An' then thee ca'st see 'en going into a workman's club : "Now then, you there, what's the matter ? This won't do. This place 'll get itself closed. Stop that ! You there, stop that, or I shall have to run you in. None of your back-answers, now ! Come on, then ! You'd better come quiet, or 'twill be all the worse for you to-morrow morning. . . ."

That's what they calls one law for rich and poor. 'Tisn't the policemen's fault ; they be but men, an' got to do the best for theirselves. 'Tis the fault o' them what sets 'em to do it. Don't they members up to Parliament, an' magistrates, an' such-like, never drink nort, that they'm always chattering 'bout temperance for working people, as if nobody else never took too much for 'em ? Don' 'em, here's luck ? You ask any chap what's been a waiter, or a lackey to 'em. Aye ! you depend upon it that if they'm going to close the "Blue Light" an' the "Waggoner" 'tis because *they* don't want 'em, an' 'cause they thinks they two pubs is the easiest to tackle. . . .'

'But they're only little beer-houses, those two,'



said Bob Partman. 'There's nothing up-to-date about them.'

'Well,' retorted Dave. 'What if they be but little beer-houses, like you says? Them that goes there finds 'em all right, else they wouldn't go. You take notice that so long as a working chap sticks to beer he don't come to much bad harm. He works it off. He may get noisy an' fight a bit on beer, but 'tis when he starts soaking spirits that he bustis up his home an' askis 'ee to lend 'en enough for a wet. An' if he goes putting down spirits on top of beer . . . Why, I've a-see'd it take three or four men for to hold a man! Yet they says that they'm closing beer-houses, where you can't get no spirits, on account o' temperance. Either they'm ignorant, which us knows they be, or else they says one thing meaning another.

'Which is it that's supposed to be worst: drinking a lot an' not showing it, like some men can, or getting drunk quick on a little? There's a difference in men that *they* don't take no count of. An' drinking it down too quick, or excitement. . . . That'll make a man drunk worse'n ort.

'I reckon the worst sort o' pubs is they there drink-shops where you stands at a counter wi'

nort else to do but to swill it down ; an' some o'em looks at 'ee, too, in such places, if you don't drink up quick and order another one. They'm far worse'n the little pubs where you can go in an' sit down for an hour, spinning up a yarn, an' not hae no more'n you'm minded.

'They thinks they'm making people drink less when they shuts up pubs ; but people's going to drink if they wants it ; an' I reckon 't isn't no good to go crowding too many into a few pubs. 'Tis a mistake. The more crowd there is in a bar the more people you meets, and instead of drinking to yourself or a couple o'ee together, you drinks in big rounds, an' 'fore you knows where you be, you makes a meal o'it. What wi' one calling for a round an' then t'other, till you've all had a call, how can 'ee help o'it ? You likes to be friendly and stand treat. What's life wuth wi'out it ? And I don't say 'tis a bad thing ; only 'tis silly to force people to it by closing the small pubs.

'An' what's more, 'tis mostly working-men's pubs they closes. But I reckon 'tis best to leave working men to drink by theirselves, whêre they all knows each other's ways an' how each other's situated. When bettermost people comes in,

what's got more money in their pocket, it only leads half the time to a fellow drinking more'n he wants to an' spendin' more'n he can afford, so's he shan't look small. An' if you ever goes into pubs an' tap-rooms, where labouring men is, all o'em squat down before their pint, you'll find 'tis better behaviour there than where all sorts is mix-muddled up together in one o' these here swagger places; aye, an' you'll find 'em jollier wi' it, too, when they'm minded an' somebody starts a sing-song. But they won't let 'ee sing nowadays in pubs, although I've a-see'd many a row stopped by some one starting up a song. That's their way o' stopping rows—to stop what you stops 'em wi'! Labouring men *is* better-behaved in pubs than bettermost people, 'less, of course, there's ort upsets 'em. That's why 'tis they'm best to themselves, 'cause they got their own ways o' drinking an' t'other sort got theirs. An' they don't always mix, like us knows.

'They tells up about temperance an' the nation's drink bill. . . . My missis had a tract give'd her t'other day, all about it, an' a piece of damn'd cheek 'twas too, wrote by some fool that seemed to think working people was all drunkards an' kids to school, an' don't know nort about nort.

'Tisn't working people that spends all o' what's spent on drink, not by a long way, an' besides there's a lot o'em for to spend it. A poor man what don't only get eighteen or twenty shillings a week, an' has a family o' kids to rear, he can't drink a lot reg'lar like ; an' then if he has a fuddle once in a way, an' kicks up a bit of a row, just because he isn't used to it, an' it gets up into his head—why, then they jumps on 'en, an' calls 'en all sorts, an' makes 'en spend a bit more o' his hard-earned coin in fines an' costis. Which is out of all reason, I say. There's isn't hardly any man what can't be got home quiet if you treats 'en proper. I've a-proved thic. There's a difference in men : some is quiet wi' liquor, so's you can't get a word out o'em, an' some is noisy : an' very likely the quiet ones has drunk more. Which is it they means to be down on 'ee for—drinking a lot or making a noise on a little ? Ah, they don't tell 'ee that !'

## 8. DRINK

‘ANYWAY,’ Dave went on, ‘proper pubs isn’t so bad as clubs an’ side-bars. If they wants to make drinking better, why don’ ’em do away wi’ back entrances an’ such-like? I don’t blame anybody for having a drink if they wants it, but the worst does it slyly, an’ there’s more harm done in little side-rooms an’ boxes, where people makes a hidie-peep o’ theirselves, than in all the big bars. Women goes there most especially, what’d know how to behave theirselves in the open. I’ve a-see’d respectable young girls half up the pole in jug an’ bottle places, wi’ chaps tickling o’em, an’ them leading the chaps on; and then—well—us knows what happens. They’d ha’ been all right in a proper open bar like a coffee tavern. Only that’s it; they’ve a-made drinking into a sort o’ disgrace, an’ they’ve a-drove people into side-bars an’ the like. An’ that’s the sort o’ thing they do



do, I tell thee, wi' their what they calls temperance an' their interfering ways. 'Tisn't to *their* credit that drinking isn't so bad as it used to be. Lord ! what liquor they there ol' men could put down when they was minded an' had the money. An' they was admired for it. A man used to be proud to be drunk. Now they calls 'en a nuisance, an' says he's a fool to hisself an' other people. I s'pose 'tis rents is dearer and there's more to spend your money on nowadays, an' people finds that 'tisin't no advantage to 'em. 'Tisin't temperance chatter, that's a sure thing. They won't tackle drink by trying to do away wi' it. Better 'fit they made 'em sell proper good drink. . . .'

A quiet man, who had been sitting in one corner of the bar, broke suddenly in upon the conversation. 'You're right !' he said, very emphatically. 'You're right. There's many a poor man falls into the hands of the police, not because he's drunk too much, but because the scoundrels have sold him rank liquor. And the poorer he is the more likely he is to be served with what's no better than poison. I'll tell you what happened to me one day : I shall never forget it. My mate and me went into Exmouth to do



some business, and then we were going up to Exeter to see a lady friend of mine. We were too early for our business, so we went into the "Least Said Soonest Mended," and had a'drink. My mate had two rums, hot, and I had two gins. I always drink gin in a strange place, because, being cheap, it's the least likely to be adulterated. Those drinks we had in the bar-parlour, and, naturally, we were as right as rain after them. Well, we did our business, and then, as we were too early for the train up to Exeter, we called back at the pub. But the second time we met some fishing chaps we knew, and went into the tap-room, where we had two more rums and two gins, rather quick. I could smell the rum was rank while he was drinking it.

' Anyhow, he came out perfectly all right. But after going a little way, all in a moment he fell up against some railings. He was pretty nearly blind ! I got him to the station ; got him into the train. He started hugging one of 'em there, and telling him he'd got nineteen children. Said he'd always paid twenty-five shillings in the pound, and had been paid ten. They all got out at the next station.

' Luckily my lady friend didn't come to meet us. My mate lurched up and down Exeter platform

calling out, "Miss B ! Miss B ! Miss B, where are you ?" until I got him into the refreshment room and gave him a couple of cups of coffee. Then I took him out into Queen Street. He simply went unconscious. I had to put my arm round him and carry him ; and as soon as I could, I dived into a side street. It's not good liquor, mind you, that acts like that ; it's poison ; nothing more nor less. I'd seen it before. He'd only had four rums, spread over a whole morning. That won't hurt a man if it's good. Doesn't hurt *him*, I know.

'A fish-hawker came along and said, "Why don't you give him some coffee ?"

"I have," I said. "Two cups."

"Well," he said, "for God's sake get him in somewhere. It looks so bad in the street."

'But I couldn't see anywhere ; and up the top of the street I did see a policeman standing. "It's all up !" I thought ; and I was just wondering whether 'twould be safe to give the bobby five shillings and tell him to fetch a cab, when I caught sight of a little eating-shop. In I goes, like a rabbit. A rather nice old woman gave us the ham and strong tea I ordered in a little back room, away out of sight.

‘No sooner’d my mate eaten a morsel and drunk a sup of tea, than—well, the old woman hurried in with a bucket ; and for two solid hours, in that little room without a fire, I held him over the bucket. Couldn’t lay him back. Couldn’t let him fall forward on his face. And, oh Lord, how that infernal rum did stink, and my arm ache fit to break ! He wasn’t properly conscious all the time.

‘In the end I laid him back on a little sofa to sleep. The old woman lighted the fire and took away the bucket. Suddenly, again, he began urging. I felt for the nice old woman’s floor after she’d been so kind. I looked round for the bucket. I rushed into the shop. I ran up a dark, narrow, corkscrew staircase. At the top there was a little upstairs kitchen with bright pots and pans hung all round it, and standing there a little, old-fashioned old lady with her black hair smoothed down in a sort of curl over her ears. I can see her plainly now—how she turned round inquiringly.

“‘Have you got the bucket?’” I asked.

“‘What is it you want?’” she said very gently.

“‘The bucket, please.’”

“‘Your poor friend below, is he any better?’”

she inquired, as if there was plenty of time to spare. "Is he still bad?"

"Oh, bad—damn bad—the bucket!" I blurted out.

'I was just in time. . . . In the evening I got him home. We travelled in the guard's van, and I mind the guard saying, "Two pretty boys *you* are, *I* know!" My mate wasn't sober; he wasn't sober all next day; but he wasn't drunk; he never was drunk; he was poisoned by cheap liquor. If it hadn't been for the old woman giving us shelter, we should have been run in for a sure thing, and have spent the night in the lock-up.

'And there's many a poor chap run in simply on account of bad liquor, but it isn't any use to tell the magistrate that, of course. . . . I've been in public-houses where if you ask for, and pay for, special, they give you common stuff after the first two or three, because they think then that you're too far gone to taste the difference.'

'Aye,' said Dave, 'I've a-see'd it, too. If 'twas open to anybody to keep a public-house, then they'd hae to sell good liquor, 'cause people wouldn't go to where 'twas bad. 'Stead o' that they closes 'em and gives all their own way to them that stays open. There's lots o' things

concerning drink that they an't worked out eet, for all they tries to force 'ee from it. An' if they closes public-houses, they'll only lead people to take it in house 'long wi' 'em, which is ten thousand times worse, 'cause they nips at it all day till 'tis gone. They says that drink is the ruin of thousands, don' 'em ; but if you looks into it you'll generally find there's summut besides the drink, summut that drove 'em or led 'em into it, some worry or trouble on their minds. . . . You can't tell ; an' that's why I never likes to run down anybody, only for getting drunk. Among women, I've a-noticed, 'tis often them as an't got no kids, or their babies has died. Can 'ee blame 'em much? They'm took that way, that's all. An't 'ee never noticed what nice, free-hearted people 'tis, very often, what takes to drink ; an' they strong teetotalers, what mump-heads they be, or else they chatters as if they was the only people in the right, till 'tis sickening for to listen to 'em ?

'I don't think people mostly drinks for drinking's sake. You goes in for the company—for to see a bit o' life. There's a lot to be learnt in pubs, an' 'tis a fine affair, I reckon, for to hae a good chatter over a glass or two o' beer. If you didn't do that, you'd go to bed an' sleep. An'



that's all some o'em wants 'ee to do, seems so—work an' sleep—an' never enjoy no life.

'They says 'tis good for truth to come out. . . . Well, there's lots of things comes out over a pint or two that wouldn't never come out no other way. Men don't seem to fear who's listening to 'em. They sort tells, too, about what drink *makes* men do. . . . 'Tisn't right. It don't make 'em do it ; it only bucks 'em up for to do what they've had it in their mind to do beforehand ; and if a man's nasty to you when he's had a glass—I don't mean if you has an argument wi' 'en, which is another thing—but if he's nasty to 'ee straight away, then you knows that that man has had an ill-feeling for 'ee all along in his mind, only he an't showed it. An' if you'm fond o' anybody genuine, then you thinks the world o'em after a few drinks, an' all the little bothers atween 'ee all goes for nort, as if they never hadn't happened. Drink, I reckon, don't really alter a man from what he is, unless, o' course, he goes in for it headlong : it unlocks 'en out o' hisself, an' makes 'en more alive ; an' that's the attraction o'it. Only thing is, when a man goes home to his ol' woman a bit tin-hats, what thinks he's got enough kids and don't intend to have no more, then he's

liable to say, "Oh, hell about it! Let 'em all come!" And they do come. Which isn't a bad thing, I s'pose. They praises 'ee for having kids so long as *they* an't got to work 'an pay for 'em, an' you have. . . .'

'Mr. Perring,' said the barmaid, 'shut up!'

'All right, my dear; I will if you'll call me Dave.'

'Well, Dave. . . .'

'There now! you owes me a kiss, because you've a-called me Dave, or else I shall change me pub, an' go to the "Blue Light." . . .

'Fill up these here glasses, please Miss, if you won't gie a fellow a kiss!'

## 9. CONSCRIPTION

COMPULSORY military service has hardly yet been sprung upon the working classes as a question that must be settled at once if the country is not to go quickly to the dogs. We have not yet been forced, with the usual mixture of soft-soap and browbeating, to vote for or against it whether we want to or not; as, for instance, we were forced to vote on education and licensing if we wished to vote for Tariff Reform or Free Trade. We have not yet had hammered into us as many whole truths of the matter, all different, as there are political parties. Our vote isn't wanted yet. The country is being educated up to the idea—those who have least to lose by it first. There have, however, even here, been lectures and debates where comfortable gentlemen, too old themselves for military service, aided by maps on which they had half forgotten their way about,

foretold terrible things—invasion and Imperial ruin—unless we adopted some form of conscription, or, as they pleasantly called it, universal training. When we have had nothing better to do, we have been to those free entertainments, and afterwards have talked the matter over among ourselves. Possibly we understand as much about it now as we shall do when electioneers and the ha'penny press have been trying to hoodwink our one eye or the other. At any rate, we can see pretty plainly how any form whatever of compulsory military training must necessarily touch us.

The arguments in favour of it seem to run on two main lines: first, necessity, and secondly, morals. We are told, without sure proof, that the country is defenceless against invasion. But we have also been told, and on just as good authority, that if the Navy fails, an army made up of every able-bodied man in the country could not save us from starvation. And we hear nothing about compulsory naval service. If the Navy does not need compulsion to make it certainly the better service of the two, why does the Army need it? The Navy, moreover, has fewer men to recruit from, for fewer men

are cut out for seafaring than for military work.

The moral argument is, as a rule, the harder pressed, no doubt because the talking legislating classes are always so much more anxious about working-class morals and duties than about their own. It is easy to point out to working men their duty, when that is simply to knuckle under to their betters, or—as a French writer whom we have lately chanced upon puts it—when ‘the duty of the poor is to defend the good things belonging to the rich, and this is how the union betwixt citizens is maintained.’ In a really democratic country, the duty of every man is clearly to do his part in defending it. Ours is not a democratic country, and so-called democratic legislation will never make it so till men are democratic in feeling as well as in talk, in private as well as in public. We are industrial, and already in the underpaid and dangerous trades the working classes give more lives to their country’s prosperity than ever the Army does. Besides, how can there be a democratic Army and Navy? With their ranks and ratings and their discipline, they are the most aristocratic institutions we have, and very properly so. The National Service League, we see, says



that the working classes would condemn as anti-democratic a system under which upper and middle class boys would escape compulsory service by serving in the Volunteer corps at their schools. Very true. So the National Service League favours a proposal by which the training would be given to the duke's son, the millionaire's son, the collier's son, or the agricultural labourer's son, on absolutely equal terms. It would be given equally, perhaps, but how received? Would taking the rich men's sons from their amusements be the same as taking poor men's sons from their work? Would they all have the same means of making their period of compulsory training pleasant? The rich men's sons might think it too democratic; the poor sons' fathers wouldn't.

The most suspicious—and the most enlightening—thing about the compulsory service movement is the support given to it by the clergy. Why should the men committed to peacefulness support the warlike spirits? The problem explains itself when we recollect that the clergy belong to the officer class; and they naturally favour what is, unconsciously no doubt, only another move of that class to bring the working

classes more under its thumb—to make them live, not as they themselves wish, but as the officer class thinks good. The clergy, of course, talk about the nation's need of discipline. They do not, on their part, appear to relish overmuch the loose discipline of the Church. Maybe they would like to exchange it for the sterner discipline of manual labour year in and year out for a bare living wage without hope of betterment, without hope of holidays in Switzerland, without hope, even, of having the bishop to lunch on confirmation days. As Mrs. Perring says, 'Tis they schools, I reckon, what puts the children off work, an' makes it harder for 'em when they've got to do it. Fine discipline 'twould be for the boys just when they've a-left school an' are getting into the collar, to have to leave work an' go into camp, an' p'raps to slop about afterwards for months looking after fresh work !'

What we should particularly like to know is : who are to be the officers in the proposed compulsory service, and what is to be their treatment of the men ? Are they to be the same sort of officers with the same sort of ways as at present ? We are proud enough of the Navy—the men, not the machinery—but those of us whose friends

are on the lower deck or in the ranks are well aware that it is not the work, but the treatment, which rouses so much dissatisfaction. We have known a naval officer called out to fight by a fisherman for his behaviour in the latter's boat. The officer apologized afterwards, explaining that it was a way he had got into in the Navy, and the fisherman replied, 'Aye! but just you remember in future when you comes down to me that you an't got me in your Navy, an' won't have me nuther, for all you got five brothers o' mine; an' you remember your shore-going manners 'long wi' me.' Men will not stand from the newer type of junior officer the same language that they would admire from a bluff old seaman, and, having been made keener on promotion than the old-fashioned, happy-go-lucky sailor, they resent their set-backs more. 'The Portsmouth mutiny,' says Dave Perring, who knows a good deal about it, and has himself done his time in the Reserve, 'thic turn-out didn't rise up all at once. 'Twas brewing, an' 'tis brewing now. Some o' they officers be ripping chaps, but often enough they treats 'ee like a dog. On the knee to 'em, that's it. When they've got 'ee there, they've got 'ee, an' they knows it, an' acts

according. *They* can't help it altogether. 'Tis the way o'it.'

The Army officers we have met are nice enough so long as things go smoothly ; they are always very willing to teach us how to do our own work ; but they are not exactly the sort of men we should like to be compelled to put the children under. If at present the boys join the Army or Navy—as the elder ones have done, and the younger ones probably will—they do it deliberately, with their eyes open, for Dave does not forget to tell them : ' You make up your mind to get on, an' 'twill be all fitty ; but 'tis like walking a chalk mark, an' if you slips off, you'm done. They can have 'ee, all ways ; mind that.' There is plenty that is bad in the Services now they have to catch their men in the open market. What it would be like if they got their men without trouble, we don't know ; but we have heard of the French and German conscript scandals.

The compulsory military service movement appears to us in the light of a huge plot, headed by Lord Roberts, who, as 'Bobs,' the hero, fought himself into the affection of the nation, and as Earl Roberts, the peer, is talking himself out of it again. Are the military authorities so in-

efficient that they want all the youth of the country to practise inefficiency on? Perhaps, however, they have improved since they failed during the Boer War to handle properly the men they'd got. Let them prove it. When we have reason to trust the Service authorities we shall be prepared to think seriously of compulsory military training—not before. And then, probably, it will be plainly unnecessary.

If the country is not safe with its regular forces at their present size, why not make the Services better worth a man's while to join? It would be expensive, doubtless, but less so than conscription; and good treatment, at all events, is not a money matter. The nation spends millions on battle-ships and guns, and treats them very delicately; flesh and blood it wants on the cheap. Seems so, anyhow, if the National Service League represents the nation. When we have to help pay for the Navy we are told that it is our national insurance. To all other forms of insurance men contribute according to the amount of their insurable property; they do now, in fact, so contribute to the national insurance by being taxed for it according to their means; and our soldiers and sailors are the men who, for certain



payments, underwrite portions of the risk. That, it seems to us, is the fairest and least undemocratic system yet invented.

Pretty nearly all the insurable property we possess is the flesh and blood they want for next to nothing.

## 10. POLICEMEN

THE new policeman was fast stirring into a blaze that dislike and mistrust of the police, as such, which smoulders always among working people.

No doubt the police are a fine body of men, tall, well fed, and intelligent ; but, nevertheless, there are two ways of looking at them : from above and from underneath. And naturally so, for the police do effectively divide the country into two classes, an upper and a lower—those above them, whose servants they are, and those beneath them, who are under their thumb. Along the dividing line, there they stand, taking their orders, together with pay and promotion, from the one class, and executing them for the most part on the other, as any police court records will show. Apart from definite crime, the upper classes have nothing to fear from the police, and are not worried by them. They do not

interfere with upper-class ways of life. (Motor-traps form a possible exception ; but the offence is very flagrant, and even then it is seldom a policeman is called upon to prosecute the gentry of his own neighbourhood.) Unless the police have a thoroughly good case, it does not do for them to proceed against those who can hire good lawyers in defence, and furthermore retaliate. Gentry, therefore, are not arrested on suspicion ; but working people are. The police are charged not only with the prevention and detection of crime among them, as among other people, but with the enforcement of a whole mass of petty enactments, which are little more than social regulations bearing almost entirely on working-class life. At the bidding of one class, they attempt to impose a certain social discipline on another. In every direction, inside his own house as well as out, the working-man's habits and convenience are interfered with, or are liable to be interfered with, or his poverty is penalized, by the police. Whether or no he comes into collision with them is more a matter of good fortune than of law-abidingness, and he is a lucky man who does not find himself in their hands at one time or another in his life. Nor can it very

well be otherwise, since the duties of the police have been made to tally with upper-class, as opposed to working-class, notions of right and wrong ; so that a working man may easily render himself liable to arrest and all sorts of penalties, from hard labour to the loss of a day's work, without in the least doing what is wrong in his own eyes or in the opinion of his neighbours. For that reason alone, there is hardly a man who cannot, from the working-class point of view, bring up instances of gross injustice on the part of the police towards himself or his friends or relations—to say nothing of cases that are plainly unjust from any point of view.

The new policeman caused many such tales to be revived. Evidently he meant to become known to his superiors as a smart and zealous officer. First of all, the children began crying out. ‘Dad,’ they came in saying, ‘you knows thic new policeman. . . . Well, bain’t us allowed to go on the pavement in Cross Street? Thic there new bobby’s turned us off.’

‘I s’pose you was kicking up a noise or summut,’ Dave replied. ‘You makes buzz enough in house here.’

‘No, us wasn’t—not then. Us was looking in

a shop window, an' he told us to git along. He's turned off Lily Brewster an' Mabel Griggs too. Lily Brewster told us so. You ask her.'

'*They'm* nice quiet girls,' Mrs. Perring remarked.

Very soon the working quarters of the town were all agog over the new policeman. Cross Street, after business hours, is something of a promenade for working people, where they stroll and talk and meet each other, without disorder and without hindering anybody. There is nowhere else for them to go on rough nights, except public-houses. But the new policeman seems to have thought it improper for working people to use the public street for any of their own purposes. He tried to break up the laughing, chattering groups ; to turn them off the pavement into the track of the motor-cars. He fell foul of some bluejackets on leave, which was really unwise on his part. He played off his game on Dave's cousin, who, when he claimed a right to be there, was very nearly run in. There was talk of an assault case because a young man teased a maiden, but the maiden resolutely refused to admit that the young man's attentions were unwelcome.

'What is it at all ?' asked Dave. 'What be



'em 'bout? Who's been ordering of 'em that the likes o' us bain't to stop an' pass the time o' day in Cross Street? We pays rates an' taxes for the upkeep of the streets, don' us. Aye, an' we helps pay the bobbies' wages, too! An' yet they'm down on us people. Why don' 'em make a start by moving on they there gentry, what'll stand up chattering for an hour right in the busiest part of the daytime, an' everything becomes 'em? They don't say nort to they; but the likes o' us, an' our kids, we'm nuisances at once. Is it 'cause they sort's got little puppy dogs running 'longside o'em, or clothes on their back that us can't afford, or hands that's clean wi' no work, or a haw-haw way o' speaking? Ah! if the bobbies was to interfere too much wi' them, like they interferes wi' us, they'd hear about it afterwards. They'd be made to know that they'd made a mistake, an' pretty quick too. That's what 'tis. You look at 'lection time, when they wants 'ee to cheer one or t'other o'em what's putting up, an' gen'lemen leads off. That's all right. Thee ca'st cheer an' shout for whichever thee't minded. But holiday time, when people's trying to make a bit of enjoyment on their own account, that's all wrong. 'Tis drunk an' disorderly then. It don't depend on

what you'm doing ; it depends on who you are, an' who's at the back o'ee.'

'I'm hanged if I'd move on for any policeman,' said Mrs. Perring, 'not ordinary times when I wasn't doing no harm.'

'What's the good of saying ort?' replied Dave. 'They'd run 'ee in an' make up a case against 'ee ; an' if you wasn't tame they'd say you was violent ; an' if you was to let slip a cuss or two, like they bettermost people lands out, wi' what they calls sarcastic, which is only their way o' cussing, an' a damn bad way—then you'd be had up for bad language as well. An' if you gets off an' bain't fined, you'm still fined the loss of a day's work, which the police won't pay 'ee for, if they loses, though *you'll* have to pay right enough if they wins. How 'bout poor ol' Buster?'

Buster is another relation of Dave's, and a quiet, harmless fellow. One day, in his own cottage, he was having a friendly argument on politics with a sailor brother who happened to be at home. Naturally, they spoke their own language, and drove their points home with a few swear words, but neither of them was loud or abusive, and no one could have heard them in the street without listening. Unluckily, a policeman happened to be

in the street, and he did listen. He scared Buster's wife by delivering a summons, haled him before the magistrates, made the worst he could of the case, and poor Buster, for using a few cusses in his own house, was fined nearly as much as he can earn by a week's work.

'How 'bout poor ol' Buster?' repeated Dave, whose indignation over the case shows no signs of lessening. 'An' that's how 'tis I tell thee; an' how 'twill be, so long as they has the upper hand o'ee. Navy officers swears—you should hear 'em, here's luck. But d'you think thic there bobby would ha' gone listening outside an officer's house an' ha' summonsed he for swearing? Course he wouldn't! But they goes for ol' Buster, what can't defend hisself, an' they fines he as much, after the rate, as if they'd fined an officer twenty pound.

'Tis all right, I reckon, for the police to keep reasonable order an' look after proper criminals; but the first thing a policeman ought to know, in my opinion, is when to let well alone. They can't be everywhere to once, an' there's things they misses, but they an't got no need for to invent rows. I was reading on the paper t'other day how the Russian police gets up rows on purpose, an' the paper spoke as if 'twas a shameful thing, that

only happened in Russia. Do 'ee think they don't never do it here? For sure they do ; an' everybody knows it, 'cepting those that ought to know ; though there's a lot of difference in bobbies, after that. Some o'em jogs along quiet.

' You see if a chap comes out of a pub a bit screwed. . . . Up goes the bobby an' interferes wi' 'en, instead o' letting 'en get along home. Tells him he'd better go home quiet, which ten to one he would do if he wasn't told so. Then the chap gets angry, asks who's drunk, an' tells the bobby to go to hell ; an' he gets run in an' fined, all through the bobby interfering wi' 'en. Certain policemen makes lots o' cases that way. An' see how they hunts down any poor devil they've a-got their knife into ! They don't gie 'en half a chance. An' the oftener they runs 'en in, the quicker they does it again, till 'tis pretty nigh enough for 'en to walk up the street. There's plenty of bobbies likes *their* bit of enjoyment once in a way on the quiet, but when us finds they bottled up, us don't run they in, n'eet report 'em, an' mightn't be believed if us did. Some o'em would lose all they got, buttons an' pension an' all, if people was minded to be dishonest wi' they, an' make cases o'em.

‘’Tis that making of cases. . . . I’ve a-heard say that policemen don’t get promotion on their cases. That may be. But if they has lots of cases, an’ proves ’em, whether by hard-swearing or not, then they gets theirselves know’d to their superiors as smart, active bobbies, an’ it’s the same thing in the end. The worst of bobbies is that they hangs together, an’ if one o’em tells a thumping gert lie, all the rest o’em backs ’en up. Not but what they bain’t like clergymen an’ doctors, an’ plenty o’ other people in that ; only there’s a difference, I reckon, in a set o’ men hanging together to their own advantage, an’ hanging together to the disadvantage of poor people what’s down under, an’ can’t help theirselves.

‘Mind you, I don’t say ’tis always the bobbies’ fault. A lot o’em’s all right when you knows ’em. They has to earn their living, an’ they has to do what’s expected o’em. ’Tis as police they’m bad, an’ right down wicked liars sometimes. Barring being policemen, they’m mostly nice enough. But there’s no trusting o’em, not the best o’em, if they can get hold of anything that they thinks, like, ’ll carry. There’s jobs, thee’s know, that’ll spoil a man, no matter how good he is, an’ being a policeman is one o’em. It holds



'em off, like, from their fellow-creatures. When they do do anybody a kindness, 'tis mostly what they ain't supposed to do, an' outside their duty. What did those three bobbies say, that us had a drink wi' up to Junction, when they was going home from a case they'd wonned in before the magistrates to Exeter. "'Tis all damn'd rot," one o'em said, "an' us knows it, but us got to carry on, an' there 'tis!"

'An' *us* knows it too. That's why us don't think nort the worse of a chap what's been to chokey; an' that's why 'tis, you take notice, that if anybody of our sort calls in the police, w'er they'm right or wrong, 'tis ten to one the neighbours turns against 'em.

'But 'tis hard to know who's to blame most; 'tis a big consarn o'it. . . .'

Dave thought for a while in deep perplexity; then suddenly brightened up. 'Chil'ern's the ones to find out what bobbies be,' he said. 'The kids gets to know w'er they'm good or bad. An' that's it, or nearabout. You take ol' Buster's case. . . . Cussing is a thing that everybody does more or less; there's nort wrong in it; 'tis only a manner o' speaking; but gentry-people, they don't like to hear it, unless 'tis them doing it. So they says

we'm not to swear ; as if us was naughty chil'ern for doing what they grown-ups *can* do. Yet they tells us, them that wants to get into Parliament, that the laws is made by the people for the people. 'Tisn't so ! Laws is made by them that's got the upper hand according to their own idea. The majority swears, but the minority punishes 'em for it. An' so 'tis in all things. D'you think, if they was to have one o' they there referendum things, to decide w'er chaps like ol' Buster should be fined a week's pay for letting slip a cuss or two—d'you think they'd win? Wi' the likes o' ol' Buster in a majority of ten to one against 'em ! An' that's the way to look at it ; an' that's the way us do look at it, only us can't all put it plain. The likes o' they got *their* ways an' *their* convenience, an' us have a-got *our* ways an' *our* convenience, which is different ; an' *they'm* in the minority ; but the police is the means they've a-got for forcing their ways an' their convenience on the likes o' us.

'That's what the police is ; an' so long as they'm that, 'twon't be no better ; 'cause although the police belongs rightly to the likes o' us, 'tis bound to be to the police's advantage for to play up to the likes o' they.'

## 11. MAGISTRATES

WHEN Dave had made his discovery that, crime apart, the police are the weapon with which a comparatively small class forces its will on the mass of the people, he did not pigeon-hole the fact at the back of his brain and rest satisfied therewith. To have done that would have been to act like those educated people, who imagine they have explained a thing and finished with it, when they have given it a name and classified it. Dave, on the contrary, had found a means of expressing shortly what had been bubbling in his mind for years. He talked about it ; he weighed up a great deal all over again in the light of it ; and he raised a buzz among his mates. But there he met with a curious disappointment. He thought at first that he had got hold of something new to them, and rather expected argument. ' 'Tis like this . . .' he'd say.

‘Course ’tis!’ they’d reply. ‘Us knows it, don’ us?’

‘I an’t never heard thee say so.’

‘That don’ matter, do it, so long as us have a-know’d it all along? Thee’t talking like one o’ they there gen’lemen what imagines everything they says is summut new, that us don’ know, an’ we’m expected to take *their* word for it, that ’tis like they says ’tis.’

One man—there were several present—one man did attempt to argue. He was a so-called industrial insurance agent, commonly called a penny-snatcher, who makes his living out of working people. On at least one worthless policy, to our knowledge, he goes on collecting regularly the weekly premium pence. ‘Yes,’ he remarked, ‘but the police have got to keep within the law.’

He was answered by the whole group at once. ‘Have ’em?—Do ’em?—How ’bout going into people’s houses when they bain’t called in an’ an’t got no warrent?—Only the people’s too frightened o’em for to kick ’em out.—Aye, they’m high-handed enough when they dares!—An’ they inspectors an’ such-like is every bit so bad; if they can’t get cases for to earn their pay, then they makes ’em.’

‘Anyhow,’ said the agent, ‘the police can’t sentence a man. They’ve got to carry it up before the magistrates. . . .’

In the midst of a chorus of scoffing, Dave took up the argument, while the others gathered closer, treating him for the moment as their spokesman against an outsider. ‘Well,’ he burst out, ‘what about it? What about magistrates? Who be ’em at all? *You* likes ’em well enough, ’cause if ever you goes to law you has your company’s lawyers for to back ’ee up.

‘An’ that’s it. What do magistrates know about the law? They knows what sentences they can give, an’ how much they can fine ’ee, an’ that’s about all. An’ what do ’em know about life—how us be situated—’cepting what they picks up in police courts, which is a pretty place for to learn it in? You can tell how much they knows by the silly questions they sort of people asks when they’m talking to ’ee. They’m made magistrates ’cause they’m gen’lemen an’ got a lot of property, not because they knows ort about law, n’eet about life. An’ ’tis perfec’y plain—they’m bound to be pretty well in the hands of the lawyers an’ the police. You see how they bends down over for to ask questions



o' their clerk, an' how they lets 'en hae his say in everything. You see, when they've a-got a crack lawyer before 'em, how he'll waggle his finger at 'em an' lay down the law to 'em, what they ought to do—for his side's benefit, o' course—they sitting an' listening like a lot o' owls along a perch. D'you think, if I was a magistrate an' know'd me business, that I'd let a bloomin' lawyer lord it over me like that? Not me! An' *they* wouldn't nuther, not if they know'd the law themselves an' felt sure of their footing.'

'But lawyers,' objected the agent with an air of superior knowledge, 'lawyers are there to put the truth before the court.'

'No, they bain't! They'm there for to win the case they'm paid to win; an' to hide the truth if 'tis needful for their purpose; an' do everything they jolly well knows how for the same purpose of winning.'

'D'you mind,' said another man, 'when Joey Roper an' two or three more o'em was had up for breaking ol' Mr. Warren's greenhouse up on land, an' there wasn't nort against 'em, 'cause nobody 'd see'd it done, only they was know'd to ha' been a walk thic way? . . . Do 'ee mind how the lawyer what was prosecuting started

spinning up a yarn about Mr. Warren being a well-respected gen'leman an' very good to the poor, an' how 'twas a disgrace for Joey an' they to ha' done it ; an' how Joey's lawyer got up an' asked what Mr. Warren being a well-respected gen'leman had to do wi' w'er the prisoners was guilty or not, an' w'er 'twas Mr. Warren being tried, or Joey an' they ? Joey got off all right ; but if Joey hadn't had a smarter lawyer than t'other, or hadn't happened to have the money by him for to hire a lawyer, how'd Joey ha' looked up ? Eh ?'

'He'd ha' got ten days for a sure thing,' said Dave. 'But that's it. An' they lawyers, how can a working chap stand up to 'em, what isn't practiced, like they be, in speaking up an' explaining hisself, an' feels excited, like, an' all of a flutter, through being there at all ? Why they cross-examines 'ee, don' 'em, an' twistis 'ee up in knots ? Aye, an' when you'm trying all you knows for to tell the truth, they've a-got tricks for making o'ee say what you don't mean to, an' then they seizes on it against 'ee. 'Tis trickery, an' nort else ; trickery that tells most against the likes o' us. Only time I see'd a working chap stand up to 'em proper was when thic crack lawyer was cross-

examining ol' Tommy Cazell, an' ol' Tommy suddently up an' says, "Look here, sir, you'm trying for to make me tell lies. I bain't here for to tell no lies, an' if you goes on trying to make me, I shan't say no more. I bain't like you, paid for telling lies. So now you knows!"

'That stopped thic lawyer's gas. "That's enough, Mr. Cazell," he says. "*Mister Cazell*," mind you! He didn't want no more of ol' Tommy's showing o'en up. But 'tisin't everybody that's got ol' Tommy's way of busting off, an' 'twouldn't do for 'em to. The lawyers has the advantage, 'cause 'tis their trade, an' they'm trained to it.'

'But, look here, Dave,' said the agent, 'every man has a chance given him of saying what he's got to say for hisself.'

'Do 'em? They'm s'posed to, p'raps. Us knows very well what happens. 'Tis like telling a dumb man that you'll be very pleased to hear what he's got to say, an' you not able to read off the deaf-an'-dumb alphabet. The bobby gets up an' kisses the Testament, an' spouts out his yarn slick out o' a notebook—most respectful, your worships. They hears the rest of the evidence, if there is any, an' then, when everybody's turned against

him, they says to the prisoner, "What have you got to say?"

"Well, sir," he begins, "'twas like this, sir. . . . I knows 'twas, 'cause my missis. . . ."

"That'll do!" they says. "Stand down. We haven't got time to listen to all that. Six shillings or fourteen days. Next case."

'That's the sort o' thing that happens. An't 'ee ever heard it? I have. An' all the time the poor devil was only trying to out wi' the whole truth o'it, an' explain hissself so well as he could in his own cock-eyed fashion. Only he was a bit long-winded, p'raps, just because he hadn't been educated up to any better.

'An' that's the disadvantage all working people's under. They bain't trained up to making speeches, an' they can't afford the best lawyers to do it for 'em, n'eet any lawyer at all very often. 'Tis a disadvantage all ways, 'cause them that can hire lawyers has the upper hand from the start. 'Tisn't no use to say they don't. 'Tis a lie. They do. An' us knows it, w'er t'other people 'll own to it or not. How else is it that extra smart lawyers gets well-know'd, an' can charge big fees, if 'tisin't that the people what pays 'em expects to get an advantage out o'it?

‘I don’t say the magistrates can help o’it altogether. Some o’em’s nice ’nuff gen’lemen, an’ tries to listen an’ weigh it all up, an’ do their best ; only naturally they leans towards their own sort o’ people, an’ looks down on the likes o’ us. Us bain’t they, an’ ’tis a sure thing they won’t look *up* to us. No doubt they do know about the likes o’ theirselves, but they don’t know our ways an’ our feelings. How can ’em? So they listens to lawyers an’ clerks an’ bobbies. It saves ’em trouble ; that’s partly why they does it ; an’ you’ll find that if you’m in a position for to save anybody trouble, an’ can go on doing it, you’m bound to be able to lead ’em by the nose in the long run. Bad magistrates wants knocking on the head for the misery they creates ; an’ the best o’em is led ; an’ the people to suffer for it is our sort, not theirs. Else ’twould ha’ been altered long ago.

‘They says that every man is equal in the eyes of the law ; an’ that may well be ; but I’m hanged if they’m equal in the hands of the law ! I tell ’ee, ’tis a tool, the law is, for them as got money an’ swank for to use it. Us an’t. But us do know it.

‘Put that in your pipe an’ smoke it, Mr. Penny-Snatcher !’



## 12. MONEY

DAVE PERRING and his brother were chaffing a young university man, who at first listened to them with an amused tolerance, but afterwards became very much more serious.

‘Going up to Lon’on in a motor-car, be ’ee?’ Dave’s brother was saying. ‘Well, if you sees any o’ your sort o’ people up there what’s got more money than they knows how to spend as they goes along, you tell ’em Ted Perring ’ll be glad of a thousand a year.’

‘They none of them think they have got more than they know how to spend.’

‘I *knows* I an’t; nor never won’t have.’

‘I don’t want no thousand,’ interrupted Dave, ‘nor yet no capital to be troubled with. You can tell ’em I’ll hae a hunderd a year—aye! or a pound a week, or even ten bob—something to fall back on if you comes to misfortune, so’s you knows

you won't starve, 'cause 'tis an awful feeling, that, an' I've a-experienced it, which you never an't, have 'ee?—something behind 'ee, like, so's you feel you can take a day off when you bain't well wi'out worrying, an' not spend all your life, like us do now, digging an' slaving your inside out, an' then end your life more poorer than what you began. How'd you like that?'

'You want the money to fall into your hands week by week, without the trouble of looking after it?'

'No, I don't. I don't want money, not a lot o'it. An' I an't said I wouldn't work. But I do want a foothold, like, an' a bit o' leisurableness 'fore I'm an ol' man. That's why I said a hunderd, 'cause I knows what to do wi' that.'

'I'd like me thousand,' repeated Ted Perring. 'I've a-worked hard 'nuff in me time, an' now I'd like to travel a bit an' see the world, that they tells so much about. 'Tisn't wrong, is it, to want to see the world? But you can't do it wi'out the rivets, an' 'tis a sure thing you can't do it after you'm dead. You tell me this, you that's supposed to be educated an' knows all about things: why should you be going up to Lon'on in a motor, an' me never be able to? What's

the difference 'tween you an' me that you should hae thic privilege ? '

' My friends asked me to go in their car.'

' An' how've they got their motors, then ? '

' By paying for them, I suppose.'

' That's it ! You've said it. The main difference between the likes o' you an' the likes o' us is, that you've a-got the rivets, an' us an't. An' us wants to know for why.'

' If you had the money, you wouldn't know how to spend it properly.'

' That remains to be seen, as the likes o' you says ; which it never won't be if I never has the brass.'

' There's as much training needed to spend money well, as there is to earn it ; more, in fact ; for one wants a tradition behind one to spend money well.'

' That may be. But 'tis a sure thing you can't hae thic training wi'out the money to be trained on. Besides, who's to say w'er I spent it well or not, so long as I spent it to my own satisfaction. Us don't inquire how rich people spends their money, nor yet how they gets it, not like they inquires an' inspects into our little consarns ; 'cepting there's a report in the newspapers when

they've been making extra special fools o' themselves. I reckon a labourer wi' twenty shillings a week an' three or four chil'ern to rear, what puts by a shilling a week, is doing so much as would make his fortune if he'd had a few hunderds to start with. Be *you* trained in spending money? An't I heard you've got a debt or two up to your school or college or whatever 'tis you calls it?'

'Only a few pounds — twenty or thirty perhaps.'

'If I was to owe so many shillings 'twould worry me no end, 'cause I shouldn't see me way clear to the paying o'it. An' when us goes to shops for to fetch what us wants, an' pays cash for it, us don't get half so well treated as them that says, "Put it down to my account an' send it up, please!" That's how your sort learns to spend money, I s'pose, by not paying it when 'tis due.'

'But I shall pay it all right in the end.'

'No doubt; 'cause for your work, when you comes to do it, you 'spects to get a sight more'n thic hunderd a year that Dave here wants.'

'I should just about think I do. See what my education has cost! A couple of thousand or so! One ought to be able to earn something after that. Your education costs you nothing.'

‘That’s right. An’ your two thousand pounds at four or five per cent, would bring ’ee in eighty or a hunderd a year if you didn’t hae no other advantage besides the money that’s been spent on ’ee. An’ you ’spects a lot more’n that, don’ ’ee? An’ how did you get your education if ’twasn’t that your father had the rivets in the first place? That’s the point. ’Tis the rivets at the bottom o’it. If you an’t got the rivets, you can’t get ’em, ’cept by luck. You never won’t by hard work alone. An’ if you’ve got ’em, you can lord it over the likes o’ us, an’ make more on to it out o’ our labour. ’Tis us keeps you lot going in the end.’

‘D’you think,’ said Dave with more than a little feeling, ‘d’you think that if I had the money I couldn’t educate my chil’ern up to being like they there gentry kids what comes along asking o’ee questions, an’ has their tongue into everything like grow’d-up people. The words *they* brings out ! Some ways they knows more than I knows ; aye, an’ laughs at ’ee to your face for not knowing ; me, that’s had chil’ern an’ reared ’em wi’ the work o’ these here arms, to be laughed at by kids because their fathers have had the money for to give ’em education !’



‘You couldn’t educate your children the same as those children are educated, no matter what schooling you gave them, unless you provided the same life and interests out of school. There’s a certain refinement that goes with education. . . .’

‘Which you can’t have unless you’ve got money to pay for it an’ time to attend to it. I knows that ; an’ I knows I an’t got nuther the money nor the time. I’ve a-got to drag my kids up, an’ then they’ve got to take their chance. Not that they’m the worse for that, only ’tishn’t a fair chance they gets. You’ve a-got the chance of getting to the top. Their chance is making the best of being down under. *I’d* hae things better in house if I had the money, an’ so’d my missis if her could afford help, ’stead of muddling through four hands’ work wi’ two arms.’

‘Like a lady come’d along to me t’other day,’ said Ted Perring, ‘an’ told me what a privilege ’twas for to have my three healthy babies, an’ how happy I ought to be, an’ how I was doing my duty to me country ; an’ I asked her who’d have to feed the little hellers when they was growing up, an’ how her’d like to be my missis wi’ all the housework to do, an’ the cooking, an’ the washing, an’ three babies to feed an’ wash for, an’ never no

proper sleep at night, an' herself not well, so's her ought to be in bed herself. The lady seemed a bit took aback. "You wouldn't like to be without 'em?" her said.

"No," I says, "you wouldn't like to cut off your leg 'cause you had a pain in it, but the pain might drive 'ee mad."

"Why ever don't you get your wife some help?" her says.

"I didn't tell her I couldn't afford it, for fear her'd think I was whining an' begging. But if her'd offered to turn to an' help my missis, even by holding one of the kids, then I *would* ha' thought there was something in what her said, an' not a mere matter o' form. "That's what it means," I told her, "for working people to do their duty, as you calls it, to their country. S'pose they was to get sick o'it?" Her didn't say no more.

'Nice 'nuff lady her was; but 'tisin't no use chattering so long as *they've* got one notion o' what's right, an' *us* got another. The likes o' they reckons justice on things as they is, but us reckons justice on things as they ought to be. They says, "What's the law?" because the laws was made by the likes o' theirselves, mostly in their own favour. But us says, "What is it that's

right? What did the laws ought to be?" because we was all born an' us bain't buried. You put it like this, sir; suppose you, being a gen'leman, had ten thousand pounds; an' me, being only a working man, had scraped together a hunderd; an' s'pose the interest on money was four per cent. You'd hae four hunderd a year, wouldn' 'ee, an' I should hae four? Which is all fair so far as interest on money goes. That'd be our incomes if *we* was nort an' money was everything. But now, s'pose we lumps you an' me in 'long wi' the capital us got, an' reckons out the proper incomes us ought to have then, not as money-boxes, but as men. 'Twouldn't be near so much difference. You might hae a quarter or half as much as me, but 'tis a sure thing you wouldn't hae ten times as much. I bain't saying there's all that difference really, but that's the two ways of reckoning justice—theirs an' ours. They'm always pushing for to reckon up things the first way, an' we says the second way is right. An' so 'tis. A man counts more than ort. *They* says, "What's a man worth?" meaning what's he got. *We* says, "What's a man worth?" meaning hisself an' his money together. *They* says, "What's just between this rich man an' that poor man?" on the supposition that they'm

to stay as they be, one rich an' t'other poor. But us says, "What's just between this man an' that man? An' how is it that one o'em *is* rich an' t'other poor?" They asks, what was a man born to? poverty or property? an' works out justice between 'em accordingly. But *us* says that us was all born naked, wi' nort at all till 'twas give'd us. That's the difference, an' there can't be no agreement till they sees it. I don' know w'er I explains meself proper. . . .'

'I should say that you ought to write down your views, or else go in for politics, if you know all about it. . . .'

'I can't write, not fitty, an' I an't got the rivets for to go in for politics. An' 'tisn't *my* views; 'tis *our* views, an' *our* feeling, an' has been for a long time, though 'tis only now that people's beginning to see it plainer. Besides, don't you think that politics is trying to alter things, really, 'cause they bain't.'

'But they're always legislating for the benefit of the poor.'

'G'out wi' thee chackle! We wants more money, an' they gives us more laws. They'm always passing summut that don't make things no better, not in the long run, an' only hampers the

likes o' us. Rivets ain't everything by a long way ; us knows that ; but 'tis precious little you can get wi'out them, an' less'n it used to be, too. An' when we asks for more rivets, they passes laws how us shall behave, so's our want of rivets shan't show, an' how to keep our health, so's us shall work better to their profit. What we wants is proper pay ; the rivets to work out our own life according to our own idea, not theirs. But they'm trying to make it heaven on the cheap. 'Tisn't to be done, I tell 'ee, an' so they'll find.'



### 13. THE LIKES O' THEY

TED PERRING lit up one of the young university man's nice cigarettes. 'Have you ever thought to yourself, sir,' he said, 'why 'twas you was born to smoke these here expensive fags, an' to have money, an' be sent to college, an' ride in motor-cars, an' hae all sorts o' advantages that I can't get for my kids, no matter how hard I works? Did 'ee do ort to deserve it 'fore you was born? S'pose you'd been my mother's son. . . .'

'But a man can't help how he was born.'

'That's it; an' getting born being a matter of chance, that's why us ought to have more equal chances afterwards. But us an't. You takes it natural for the likes o' us to call 'ee "Sir," an' touch our caps to 'ee, an' run if you says, "Hurry up!" An' us takes it natural for to do it. 'Tis a small thing that don't matter, you might say. But there's a meaning behind it. It means that we'm

down under, an' knows it, an' you'm up above, an' an't got it in mind to shift therefrom. Although 'tis the way of the world, 't isn't natural, not really. By rights, out here on a fishing beach, you ought to touch your cap to us, an' call us "Sir"; only you don't, an' us don't expect nor want it; 'cause we'm the better man out here, an' could work you off your legs. 'Tis you that's ignorant out here. Aye! if you was out working 'long wi' us, we should still treat you like a gen'leman, when all the time we should have to ease you of half your work, an' your life itself would be depending on our judgment an' strength.'

'I don't want you to call me "Sir," and all that. I'd rather you didn't.'

'Us knows that. Us knows *you* don't want it, else you'd be like some of the rest o'em, an' say, "Beautiful weather! Good-morning!" so soon as a fellow begins to speak his mind. We'm expected to shut up when they've heard enough. But there's some o'em looks down their nose when they don't get what they calls respectfulness; an' even them that don't *want* it, misses it when they don't get it. There isn't no getting out o'it: they'm the "gen'leman," an' we'm "me man"; an' that's the point they starts from.'

‘Well, I’ll tell you my experience. When I travel by train, I always try to treat the porters as pleasantly as possible, and *ask* them to do things for me. The consequence is, at some of the junctions I go through, they look out for me, and they’ll do pretty well anything I want—all sorts of things they needn’t do. It’s nice to go through stations and find the porters pleased to see one. But if I’m really in a very great hurry to catch a connexion, I find that asking is no good. I’ve got to give an order, tell the man to look sharp about it, and then shell out a fattish tip. I’ve got to “do the gentleman,” in fact. How about that?’

‘How ’bout it!’ broke in Dave. ‘’Tis the way of the world, isn’t it? An’ whatever the way of the world is, a chap’s got to go about it the best way he can for to earn a living in it, specially if he’ve got a wife an’ kids. But that don’t say ’tis right, after that. There wouldn’t be no occasion for tips if people was paid proper. We humbles ourselves to the likes o’ they, an’ fools we be for doing it! An’ us knows it! Only a fellow can’t hardly help it, ’cause it’s been ground into him since he was a baby, an’, as I says, he’s got to lick up a living somehow off somebody’s boots. What

was it they used to teach us to Sunday school :  
“To order ourselves lowly and reverently to all  
our betters” ? That was all very well for them  
to teach us, what thought themselves our betters.  
But 'tis obsolete. We wants to know who is our  
betters, an' why ; who is it's more capable, like,  
for doing the work that has to be done, an' who  
is it's kinder according to their means. *We'm*  
going to have a say now in judging who is the better  
man. An' who is it ? 'Tisn't simply him that's  
more lucky, an' has the chance of making more  
money. 'Tis a genuine better man, an' him we'm  
so ready to respect as ever us was, when us comes  
acrost 'en. For you take notice, no man can help  
respecting in his heart a better man than hissself,  
whether he wants to or no, w'er he'll allow he does  
or not. 'Tis a funny thing, that, but 'tis human  
nature, sure 'nuff.

‘Don't you run away with the idea that us got  
ill-feeling towards the likes o' they, an' wishes 'em  
harm, an' wants to take away what they've already  
got. I don't wish nobody no harm ; that'll come  
to 'em quick enough ; an' let 'em enjoy what  
they've a-got, I say. But all the same, us can see  
how things is. Lots o'em's nice gen'lemen an'  
ladies, an' oftentimes they means to be kind when

they bain't. But there's precious few o'em 'll do ort for 'ee wi'out making that an excuse for to get more hold on 'ee. The laws they passes for the poor up to Parliament only chucks 'ee into the hands of the policeman, an' 'spectors, an' lawyers, an' such-like—out o' the frying-pan into the fire—an' then they rises the taxes on the little you have got for to keep thic lot going. Us don't want their kindness of that sort. Us'd rather muddle on our own old way.

'They takes the upper hand o'ee natural-like, wi'out knowing they'm doing it. They takes their own position for granted. Some o'em treats 'ee like dogs, an' the best o'em treats 'ee like chil'ern that can hae a ha'porth o' sweets so long as they does what they'm told. Better 'fit they kept the ring clear for fair fighting, man to man, an' no unfair advantage. But the advantage over 'ee that they've got—they don't never give away none of that, whatever else they gives 'ee. . . .'

'Give it away, no!' said Ted. 'What they gives away is a bit o' what their advantage gets 'em. 'Tis like thic master-builder what I had an argument with t'other day. He'd had three or four o' his chaps digging sand in the boiling hot sun an' carting it up from the shore, an' he comes



along hisself taking the air, beautiful an' cool, wi' money in his pocket for so many drinks as he was minded. "How'd 'ee like to work for your living?" I says to 'en friendly like.

"So I do, Teddy," he says.

"I means," I says, "how'd 'ee like to turn to an' work like your chaps there?"

"I pays 'em their wages for what they does, don' I?" he says.

"Aye!" I told 'en. "You pays 'em what the sort o' men you wants can be got to work for in this district."

"An' I've just give'd 'em sixpence for a couple o' quarts of cider, too," he says.

"What!" I says, reckoning o'it up in me mind. "That there's a profitable job. You gets the sand for nort an' sells it at a good price an' has the carting o'it, too. You gets pretty nigh so much out o'it in one day as you'll pay all those chaps in wages for the whole week, an' then you gives 'em sixpence-worth o' cider, an' they says what a good master you be. 'Twill ruin 'ee, sure! You ain't fit for to be a master if you slats your hard-earned profits about in that way!"

"Not but what 'twasn't very decent o'en to give they chaps the cider, considering, as things is,

that he needn't to have done it, an' nobody 'd ha' thought a bit the worse o'en. But he didn't give away none o' his advantage for making profits out o' their labour. That's what I means. An' 'twill hae to alter. 'Tis easy to be generous so long as you holds yourself in a position to be so ; so long as you gains what didn't ought to be yours, according to the work you does, an' then gives a little bit of your profits away, what somebody else has earned for 'ee. An' you'm praised for doing it. You see how, if a big lady or gen'leman does the leastis little thing, opens an entertainment, or picks up a kid in the street an' gives it sixpence to stop it squalling—you see how they'm praised for their kindness in doing o'it. But 'tis their position that's praised, really. If I was a big man an' rich, I should only hae to smile an' say "Good-morning, how are you?" to Tom, Dick, an' Harry, for every one to say what a rare nice chap I was. An' lots o' our own sort upholds 'em in it ; I'll admit they do ; an' more fools they ! But they don't uphold the consequences, an' often they laughs or cusses up their sleeve. I reckon when an employer uses his labourers for to make what they calls an extra good thing out o' a job wi'out paying o'em any more, I reckon 'tis 'xactly on all

fours wi' the workmen skulking, that they tells up so much about. They'm being paid, both o'em, more than they'm earning after the rate. Only what's called skulking in a man is called good business in a master.'

'Look here,' protested the young university man, 'you talk, but what do you people do? You've got the political power in this country if you genuinely want to alter things.'

'Have us? We'm s'posed to hae it, I know. But d'you think all they there politicians, that us votes for to represent us, bain't all in the swim together for to look after their own sort first, an' to push their own ideas? Course they be! Us have a-proved it. . . .'

'Working people are suspicious to the point of absurdity, and hard to work with. They don't hold together. They don't follow their leaders. More often than not they throw them over at the critical moment.'

'So'd your sort be suspicious if they'd been used to being kept down—kept in their place, they calls it—an' if they was always having hopes dangled before 'em what didn't come off. 'Tis hellish hard for them what ain't sure of next week's wages to hold together. You've got to

get what you can, where you can, an' how you can. You've got to get next week's wages if you stands to lose next year's by taking 'em. 'Tisn't the same if you got a yearly income. Then you can look a bit ahead. Besides, why should us take for leader any bloomin' chap wi' a jaw, what likes to set hisself up for being so, an' work in wi' the likes o' they? . . .'

'There's hardly a successful working-class organization that isn't kept together by some one not working-class, behind the scenes if not in front. You can't organize. . . .'

'Give us the chance of learning first. Why shouldn't us use their brains? They uses our labour. Us bain't all a whacking great trades union, like gentry is. . . .'

'Rot!'

'Bain't 'em! You offend one o'em, an' see if you don't offend all o'em within reach o' his tongue. Don' 'em keep certain sorts o' soft jobs for their own selves, an' our trades unions can't hardly make no headway against 'em? Not that I approves o' the way trades unions keeps good workmen back from doing their best.'

'Working-class politics are penny wise, pound foolish, and always have been. . . .'

‘That’s so. That *is* the point. ’Tis easy to be pound wise when you’ve got the pound to be wise with. If you’ve only got the penny you’ve got to do the best you can wi’ it, an’ be penny wise. You can’t be pound wise when, may be, it takes ’ee a week for to earn thic pound, an’ ’tis partly spent afore ever you gets it.’

‘It’s not the rich that are the worst grinders of the poor. . . .’

‘No ; they employs managers an’ companies an’ agents, an’ all sorts o’ people for to do their dirty work for ’em ; though ’tis certainly our own sort, what’s rose a bit, that’s down hardest on the likes o’ us. I’ll give in to that. They an’t got no notion of give an’ take. The proper big people, they takes it ’cause they’m used to it ; by a manner o’ right, as you might say. They catches ’ee in a net they’ve a-had laid since old times. But they sort that ain’t no sort at all, they’m greedy for it. They hooks ’ee, an’ it hurts more.’

‘Well, what *do* you want ?’

‘That’s the trouble. ’Tis such a complicated affair o’it. Us do know what us wants, an’ yet us don’t, if you understands. Us can’t explain ourselves your way, n’eet tackle ’ee on your own ground.’



‘Aye!’ said Dave, ‘an’ us wants it bad.’

Then one of his curious sweeping flashes of insight came to him. ‘You’m young yet,’ he said. ‘You’m learnt in books, an’ now you’ll live an’ learn the ways of life. But you take notice — that’s how revolutions is made — when people don’ know ’xactly what they wants, but wants it hellish bad for a long time. ’Twould be best in the end for the likes o’ you to give us the help us wants for to put things right. ’Cause we’m all depending on each other.’

‘*We*,’ said the young university man shortly afterwards, ‘we look at things from the point of view of civilization, whereas *they* only look at them from the point of view of mankind.’

‘Mankind remains,’ I answered, ‘but civilizations snuff out, mainly because they refuse to take sufficient count of mankind.’

Which is, I think, just the same answer as Dave and Ted Perring and the rest of them would have given, if they had happened to have read the history of other civilizations.

## II



#### 14. THE PEOPLE AND THEIR VOTE

A FEW days after the General Election of January 1910, I happened to be present while a number of working men, some of them strongly partisan during the election, some of them newspaper-readers and others not, were chatting it over among themselves. 'Well,' remarked one, 'tis a good job 'tis over, I say. 'Twas a lot of fuss and precious little to come of it. We've got one of 'em in by a big enough majority and fired t'other man out, and nuther one of the hellers is any better than t'other one.'

'For sure they bain't!' was agreed to.

'If they'd only explain things so's that a fellow could get the hang of it better . . .' said another man. 'But they don't. They confuses 'ee a-purpose. They tells up lies one across t'other, and 'tis which of 'em can tell the biggest wins. Ah! all they sort wants is to try and get over

'ee for their own ends. They treats 'ee like fools, and fools we be for to listen to 'em. But if they think us can't see through it, they'm much mistaken.'

That conversation took place in one of those southern constituencies which were variously called 'benighted,' because they failed to support Free Trade and the Budget, and 'bulwarks of English common sense,' because they did support Tariff Reform, mostly for reasons disavowed by the responsible leaders in that policy. Benighted or not, certainly uneducated in the ordinary sense of the word, those men had come to substantially the same conclusion as a university professor of political economy, Mr. Graham Wallas, in a book<sup>1</sup> the interest of which has by no means diminished during the three years since its publication; and they were tackling already a problem which shows signs of forcing itself upon popular attention—namely, the worth, the practicability even, of our present system of representative democracy. They were tackling it, moreover, from the right side—the under-side; for if the House of Commons is built up upon elections, and elections are, in one word, bunkum, then

<sup>1</sup> *Human Nature in Politics*, by Graham Wallas.



the House of Commons is like a house built upon sand.

‘At first sight,’ says Mr. Wallas, ‘the main controversy as to the best form of government appears to have been finally settled in favour of representative democracy.’ And he goes on :

‘Almost all those who now hope for a social change by which the results of modern scientific industry shall be more evenly distributed, put their trust in the electoral activity of the working classes.

‘And yet, in the very nations which have most whole-heartedly accepted representative democracy, politicians and political students seem puzzled and disappointed by their experience of it. . . . As far as an English visitor can judge, no American thinks with satisfaction of the electoral “machine” whose power alike in Federal, State, and Municipal politics is still increasing.

‘In England not only has our experience of representative democracy been much shorter than that of America, but our political traditions have tended to delay the full acceptance of the democratic idea even in the working of democratic

institutions. Yet, allowing for differences of degree and circumstance, one finds in England among the most loyal democrats, if they have been brought into close contact with the details of electoral organization, something of the same disappointment which has become more articulate in America. . . . In my last election I noticed that two of my canvassers, when talking over the day's work, used independently the phrase, "It is a queer business."

And why? Mr. Wallas gives a short enough answer in the excellent Synopsis of Contents with which his book is furnished: 'The empirical art of politics consists largely in the creation of opinion by the deliberate exploitation of sub-conscious non-rational inference.'

It was that exploitation of which the above-mentioned working men were aware; that exploitation which they resented. Up and down country, among working people, one hears similar conversations or the echoes of them. Nothing was more noticeable about the last two General Elections than the rapidity with which the mass of the electorate has become disillusioned as to the worth of the vote and the rightness of the

methods used by one side or the other to obtain it. More striking than the tremendous efforts made to rouse political passion was the comparative non-success of those efforts. The campaigns were loud and fast rather than passionate with the passion that, even though it result in brawls, arises from political earnestness and conviction. 'What's the good of upsetting yourself over an election?' said men who a few years ago would have upset themselves and everybody else. They fought with zest, of course. It was good sport, a fine spree. And they polled well. The party workers saw to that. But although the newspapers, whose political and financial interest it is to exaggerate the wildness of elections, described the campaign as one of unprecedented fury, one's own observation and reports from onlookers in notoriously rough constituencies all point to the fact that on the whole the elections were fought with unusual good humour and tolerance. Political language in the newspapers far outstripped political feeling in the country. In the little town where I am writing, a torchlight procession was organized to welcome the Conservative victor. Many Liberals turned out. 'Why shouldn't a fellow cheer him?' they said. 'He's fought hard and he's won.' In

other words, an election in which the whole future and safety of England were supposed to be at stake was treated like a football match. After the first election, West-countrymen were left wondering why no petition had been presented against the Exeter return. But they were not very indignant. They were laughing, because the pot dared not call the kettle black before a judge. If the rules of the game at Exeter admitted open bribery in the streets, that was enough. You could take half a sovereign from each side, and, after that, vote which way you like. Intimidation? Were not the dear loaf and the German Navy both used for intimidation on a vast scale? Working men could see through it, even while they cheered the scaremongers on. And when, after the second election, a petition was presented against the Exeter return, everybody was much more amused than indignant. They looked upon the trial as yet another game kindly provided by the pot and the kettle. The good humour of the elections was very largely the good humour of a game, a struggle admittedly make-believe; their tolerance the tolerance of disillusionment.

The point is, not that political thinkers and the

more thoughtful political workers should suffer disillusion ; that was inevitable : it is that disillusionment should be spreading so rapidly among the masses of the electorate ; that the growing national self-consciousness should be fastening upon electoral methods, as well as on defence, unemployment, degeneration, and the like. So good a case was made out against the House of Lords that they started to reform themselves ; yet it cannot be said that there has been any ardent national desire to restrict their veto, except on the part of those who have some specific advantage to gain. The Lords have not themselves to thank. At least as much as innate conservatism and respect for a lord, the reason seems to be a mistrust of the House of Commons ; mistrust, that is to say, of a body chosen by elections, the chicanery of which every man can see, and very dependent in doing its work on Parliamentary tactics of which the plain man reads and disapproves ; in short, an underlying fear that, with the House of Commons as cook, constitutional change will prove to be a jump out of the frying-pan into the fire. In that respect, at all events, the disillusionment has already begun to take effect on practical politics.



And the disillusionment, as Mr. Graham Wallas shows in his study of *Human Nature in Politics*, was bound to come, though he for one, apparently, did not expect it so quickly. He points out that the collapse of the old political science, which was based on 'the natural rights of man,' or mankind's 'two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure,' or 'a few simple principles of human nature,' led to a reaction not yet at an end. 'For the moment, therefore, nearly all students of politics analyse institutions and avoid the analysis of man.' The thing done is considered apart from the doer of it, the institution apart from the men who collectively are the institution. In consequence, the elector is talked to about his 'sovereign will' when he knows that his will, if he definitely has one, is not sovereign. Every election address, pretty well every political speech, assumes what clearly isn't so. New institutions framed on, and old institutions patched up according to, these assumptions are found not to work very well. Legislation gives the impression not of remedying things, but of tinkering with them—hence the appeal of a sweeping change like Tariff Reform. The theory and practice of government plainly do not agree. More powerful causes of disillusionment, once the

process is started, once the eyes of men are turned that way, could hardly be found.

The contrast between the theoretical and the real is amazingly brought out in Mr. Wallas's criticism of the Introduction by Mr. James Bryce to Professor Ostrogorski's *The American Constitution* :

““In the ideal democracy,” says Mr. Bryce, “every citizen is intelligent, patriotic, disinterested. His sole wish is to discover the right side in each contested issue, and to fix upon the best man among competing candidates. His common sense, aided by a knowledge of the constitution of his country, enables him to judge wisely between the arguments submitted to him, while his own zeal is sufficient to carry him to the polling-booth.”

‘A few lines further on Mr. Bryce refers to “the democratic ideal of the intelligent independence of the individual voter, an ideal far removed from the actualities of any State.”

‘What does Mr. Bryce mean by “ideal democracy” ? If it means anything, it means the best form of democracy which is consistent with the facts of human nature. But one feels, on reading the whole passage, that Mr.

Bryce means by those words the kind of democracy which might be possible if human nature was as he himself would like it to be, and as he was taught at Oxford to think it was. If so, the passage is a good instance of the effect of our traditional course of study in politics. No doctor would now begin a medical treatise by saying, "the ideal man requires no food, and is impervious to the action of bacteria, but this ideal is far removed from the actualities of any known population." No modern treatise on pedagogy begins with the statement that "the ideal boy knows things without being taught them, and his sole wish is the advancement of science, but no boys at all like this have ever existed."

'And what, in a world where causes have effects and effects causes, does "intelligent independence" mean?'

With the abandonment of what Mr. Wallas calls the intellectualist conception of politics, the ideal democrat has to make way for the actual live citizen we know, with whom alone politics are concerned. And when the voter is examined by the light of modern psychology, he turns out to

be anything but the rational creature—disinterested, non-emotional, acting always on a reasoned opinion—whom our representative democracy has in view. His political actions are seen to be the result rather of habit and emotion, than of logic. He acts much on impulse and on the inherited impulses which go by the name of instinct ; and his impulses and instincts are powerful in action according as they are primitive, and have been acquired by his race far back in its evolutionary past. Thus it is found in electioneering that affection for a candidate will do more than the best arguments on his behalf. Suspicion and fear can damage him more than a lost controversy. The fighting instinct, once roused, will keep a party together as nothing else can ; it is the stronger half of so-called party enthusiasm. An emotional appeal is found to be powerful and long-lasting in proportion as it is pure and first-hand ; in proportion, that is to say, as it is unmixed with other emotions, and is based on something the voter knows, feels, or observes for himself. Hence the use of local colour, so to speak, in elections ; of the presence of the candidate in every quarter and of driving home arguments with local illustrations. A halfpenny on bread will cause more indignation against the Government

than a fall of millions in the Board of Trade returns. A mate thrown out of work overshadows the whole problem of unemployment ; his complaints on the spot have an emotional driving force denied to a leader of the Opposition in the *Times*. The emotional effect of a newspaper article is powerful at the time because it aims skilfully at kindling one sort of emotion, but short-lived because the emotion is second-hand and disappears like a puff of smoke among the realities of the reader's workaday world. It is these emotions, impulses, and instincts that the election-agent seeks to manage, not yet scientifically so much as by rules of thumb based on experience and by taking advantage of the happy chance. By keeping in touch with the voters he learns to steer a course between the amount of repetition which impresses and the further amount which only wearies.

And even when men do act on inference, it by no means follows that the inference is directed towards a definite end. Still less does it follow that the inference is reasoned, rational, logical. ' The political opinions of most men are the result, not of reasoning tested by experience, but of unconscious or half-conscious inference fixed by habit. It is indeed mainly in the formation of



tracks of thought that habit shows its power in politics. . . . Some men even seem to reverence most those of their opinions whose origin has least to do with deliberate reasoning.' If the big political organizations, like the Budget Protest League and the Free Trade Union, with their posters and long purses, and the political daily Press, with its contents-bills and headlines, have a special province, it is the production and control of irrational inference—commonly called 'education of the masses.' The newspaper contents-bills, as Mr. Wallas remarks, threaten to turn the streets into a psychological laboratory for the production of irrational inference. On a hundred such bills the voter sees the word 'Wastrel' or 'Socialist' applied to a party. 'If he reflected, he would know that only one person has once decided to use the word, but he does not reflect, and the effect on him is the same as if a hundred persons had used it independently of each other.' By a contents-bill, clever to admiration, the *Daily Mail* contrived to suggest that Mr. Asquith was not to be trusted. One day, after a Cabinet Council, the Prime Minister went to the Apollo Theatre. Next morning the country saw, not a hard-worked Minister recreating himself with M. Pélissier's

humour, but everywhere, in large red letters : MR. ASQUITH AT THE FOLLIES. Subconscious, very irrational inferences : Mr. Asquith playing the fool, Mr. Asquith a fool !

It is fruitless to say that men ought not to act politically from such mixed motives. They must, being men. The different motives cannot so much as be accurately distinguished from each other, and in every individual the mixture varies.

‘The mind of a man is like a harp, all of whose strings throb together ; so that emotion, impulse, inference, and the special kind of inference called reasoning, are often simultaneous and intermingled aspects of a single mental experience.

‘This is especially true in moments of action and excitement. . . . And when our thought clearly belongs to the type of inference it is often hard to say whether its steps are controlled by so definite a purpose of discovering truth that we are entitled to call it reasoning.’

Furthermore, exact reasoning requires exact comparison, and the material of political reasoning, unlike the material of the sciences, is not concrete and sensibly comparable, or abstract but exactly

comparable ; for politics must deal with living men, each as a whole, and no two men are wholly alike, nor can they be depended upon to act similarly under similar circumstances. 'Man has therefore to create entities that shall be the material of his reasoning, just as he creates entities to be the objects of his emotions and the stimulus of his inferences.' And it is the peculiarity of political entities that they seldom mean the same thing to any two men, and that they are capable of great modification. To one man 'England' is primarily the home that he loves, to another the nation with a great history, to another a little island with a big Empire. 'Liberty' for one is freedom to vote as he likes ; for another, freedom to sell his labour unhindered ; for another, the privilege of getting drunk without being punished. To some, 'Conservatism' means conservation, but it has lately been so modified that it means for the majority a radical change in the financial system of the country. Tariff Reform, Home Rule, Socialism, are entities that have inspired enthusiasm and enmity, and have given rise to endless arguments. Yet ask the average voter who is holding forth on those subjects exactly what he means by them. More often than not he cannot say. Staunch

Conservatives will agree to quite comprehensive schemes of Home Rule, and will make the most sweeping socialistic proposals, provided 'Home Rule' and 'Socialism' are not mentioned. They are fears and hopes, bogeys and wills-o'-the-wisp, entities almost empty, yet possessed of immense power.

It is in the creation and modification of political entities, no less than in the production of irrational inference, and in the rousing and management of impulses, that the exploiter of the electorate finds his opportunity. So well has opportunity been used that the art of practical politics has grown to resemble very nearly the modern art of advertisement. 'Before my first election,' remarks Mr. Wallas, 'my most experienced political friend said to me, "Remember, you are undertaking a six weeks' advertising campaign."' And in advertisement it is notoriously money that tells ; unscrupulousness combined with the brains money can buy. Is it to be so in politics ? For if it is, then representative democracy must almost certainly come to a bad end.

Mr. Wallas has somewhat chilly hopes to offer. He contemplates, apparently, an increased influence on the part of the non-elected higher Civil Service,

which will, he thinks, deal with problems and collections of facts, too complex for the electorate, after the method of the mathematical biologists, already used by Royal Commissions, in Blue Books, and for large business calculations—the method of intersecting curves; and will then hand on the simplified results to politicians for submission to the electorate. He notes, too, the increasing self-consciousness, or self-awareness, of people.

‘In so far as this change extends, the politician may find in the future that an increasing proportion of his constituents half-consciously “see through” the cruder arts of emotional exploitation.

‘But [he says] such an unconscious or half-conscious extension of self-knowledge is not likely of itself to keep pace with the parallel development of the political art of controlling impulse. The tendency, if it is to be effective, must be strengthened by the deliberate adoption and inculcation of new moral and intellectual conceptions—new ideal entities [like “Science”] to which our affections and desires may attach themselves.’



New ideal entities may or may not be in process of creation. At all events, their growth will be slow. Meanwhile a disillusionment undoubtedly has come about and is spreading quicker than Mr. Wallas anticipated, though as yet its outward effect on politics is not fully evident. But if that were all, it might be said that on the whole our representative democracy does not show a tendency towards improvement ; that the good signs do not balance the bad. Is it all ? During recent General Elections, it has seemed that other and more immediately hopeful forces were at work among the working-class electorate. Of the following conclusions, the main part of those dealing with the last two General Elections were drawn from a constituency in the south-west of England. Its electorate is fairly mixed. Not highly educated, it comes into contact a good deal with the outside world. In politics it is decidedly Conservative, but in temper rather independent and radical. Every conclusion, however, has been checked as carefully as possible by what I could see and hear of other constituencies—their real state of mind, not merely that which political workers see. Constituencies do not appear to differ much in essentials, unless one class is specially predominant.

The ready suspiciousness of working people, which makes it such heart-breaking work to lead them or to try and benefit them in any way (unless one bears constantly in mind its causes and the good qualities with which it co-exists), has also its useful side. It is a powerful ally of self-knowledge against political exploitation. Amongst themselves, probably, working people have always been suspicious of politicians ; and never more so than to-day, when they read with jeers of the salaries paid to Ministers ; when they have seen so many political promises broken, and have so often been fobbed off with what is supposed to be good for them, instead of what they wanted. Parliamentary tactics, of which they now read so much, but which they neither understand nor approve of, confirm their suspicions.

The cheap political Press is becoming an object of stronger and resentful suspicion. (Some of the more violently partisan newspapers owe their circulation mainly, of course, to the vigour of their racing columns, in which the reader is exhorted one day to back a certain horse, and next day must buy the paper again to see how and why another horse won—and so on.) Its irresponsibility for anything except vote-catching is

defeating itself. The semi-educated clerks of the suburban railway train, the tradesman hurrying down-street to see if the papers are in, place more reliance on its statements than do workmen ; for working people, who live much in the past and let the future take care of itself, have longish memories. In the end, it does not do to tell them one thing one day and the reverse next week. Among some of the younger men here it was one of the jokes of recent elections to get hold of rival halfpenny journals and to compare their headlines ; and the verdict usually was : ' They're all of 'em liars together. They only does it to deceive the likes of us. They ought to be muzzled or put a stop to, I reckon.' Children bawled out a song, one line of which ran : '*I don't care what the papers say!*' Not that the political Press was wholly disbelieved. You believed it when you wanted to, and culled from it support for arguments picked up elsewhere. But even that denotes an important limitation of influence. It must be remembered that the Press does not represent the working man, or voice *his* views. The controversies between the party journals are other people's quarrels, that he watches. In the struggle his position is not

that of fighter, but of referee. As such, he sees the foul play, and more and more he condemns the players.

For the working man likes fair play. Possessed of small political foresight, being a critical rather than a constructive politician, fair play is his chief standard of judgment. In the guise of 'Fair Trade,' the Tariff Reform policy most attracted him. There was no great desire to take away from the rich man even ill-gotten wealth. 'Us don't want what they got; 'tis theirs. What ought to be put an end to is the unfair advantage they got over us in the getting of it,' was the view most commonly expressed. As a piece of unfairness, the Plural Vote made one side indignant and the other uncomfortable. It is irrelevant to tell working men that the plural voter has property, and therefore a greater stake in the country's welfare. They know too well, if they think at all on the subject, that incomparably the greatest stake a man can have in the country is his own life and the necessities of life for himself and his family. From the workman's standpoint, a man with a wife and children to support deserves two votes as much as, if not more than, a man with property in two divisions.

So far as one could see, both parties overestimated the selfishness and underestimated the intelligence of the working-class electorate. The appeal was pitched too low. The cries of dearer beer and bloated armaments were both met very frequently by the simple declaration : 'If the country's got to have *Dreadnoughts*, we're ready to pay our share ; only let them as got more than us pay theirs.' The brewing and tobacco combines did but harm their own side in raising their prices by more than the additional duties. Working men saw what was going on this time—saw how helpless the consumer was in the hands of those trades which deal in dutiable commodities ; and the argument that Protection would encourage trusts gained ground accordingly.

It is too much assumed that the working man cannot grasp political problems, when what he cannot understand is the language in which they are stated ; or else that he has not grasped them because he cannot make himself understood. Granted he is not very logical (Mr. Wallas shows how fallible a guide logic is in politics), and that he does not correlate his different arguments and opinions ; so that he is quite capable of holding opposite opinions on the same subject ; granted



he is apt to keep his non-political views on life and his political opinions at election-time in water-tight compartments—the keenest working-man Conservative I know is extremely radical when it does not occur to him that he is talking politics, and the most enthusiastic Radical is in temperament excessively conservative ;—granted he holds fast to some big misconceptions (and is encouraged to do so by those who know better themselves) ; that he still thinks Socialism means simply the equal and forcible distribution of money, that he confuses wealth and coin in a way very natural to the weekly wage-earner, and that he cannot distinguish for long at a time the difference between the circulation of money and the productive use of it ; granted, further, that some working men do not trouble their heads about politics, or vote as frivolously as the educated man who is Conservative solely because his father was ; and also that bribery and intimidation, sometimes direct, more often ingeniously indirect, are practised extensively—it yet seems that working men in general weigh up the facts at their disposal at least as fairly as any other class. They are anxious to be fair. They find it good sport to listen to both sides. They do not treat views

opposed to theirs as immoral. If not logical or politically far-seeing, they are shrewd, and suspicious of plausible words. Having fewer political entities with which to burke reality, they argue more directly from experience. If they want something, they say so, without pretending that it is the one thing needful for the nation. The trouble is that as the polling-day approaches they so often forsake their better opinions and substitute for them the rattle-box provided by a party organization.

The importance of working-class fairness in weighing up facts lies in this : that the body of facts, genuine or spurious, accessible to them has so enormously increased of late ; and they undoubtedly tend to examine the sources of their information more critically. Who, before the last two elections, ever heard Board of Trade returns bandied about among working men ? Was there ever, in southern England, at any rate, such an amount of keen and comparatively dispassionate argument ?

Though near the time of polling the elections were fought on funk—funk of the Germans, funk of the dukes, funk of Socialism, any sort of funk that could be beaten up—the fiscal controversy

provided a particularly good arguing ground during the earlier stages of the campaigns ; for trade and figures do not of themselves give rise to hot feeling. And the ground was well used. At political meetings in all parts of the country the amount and ability of the heckling, as distinct from disorder, was noteworthy. The arguments I heard among working men were in many cases superior both in cogency and force to the speeches one could listen to at meetings. They backed their reasons with experience. Among men somewhat more educated (in the ordinary sense of the word again) the talk was so often nothing but second-hand newspaper matter badly reproduced.

Mr. Graham Wallas does not, as a factor in modern electioneering, attach much importance to the distinctive psychology of the crowd, in which every impulse is greatly intensified by physical contact. But whenever one watches an election carefully, it is possible to discern, shortly before the polling, what men of science would call a critical point—a critical day, on which political argument gives way to election fever, inference to impulse. The psychology of the electorate changes from that of a collection of individuals to a psychology, if not of the crowd, at all events of public excitement.

After that day the man whose opinions have been strongly on one side is led into voting for the other side on impulse ; and the superior ability of the Conservative Party to enchain instinct and arouse impulse begins to tell. (Herein, probably, is the explanation why in some parts of the country enthusiastic Liberal meetings had so little result at the poll : Liberal prudence is not congenial to men in a state of excitement.) On the critical day the greater portion of the electorate definitely divides into two sets of partisans ; doubters draw into line ; the sower of irrational inferences begins to reap ; the exploiter of impulse and instinct sets to work in earnest.

One thing of the greatest import is, however, to be noticed : the critical day tends to draw nearer and nearer to the polling-day. Where once the critical day was that of issuing the writ, or of the member's appearance in the constituency, it is now no more than forty-eight hours from the date of the poll. Will the critical day and the polling-day merge ? Can they be made to merge ? On the answer depends in a large measure the future of representative democracy.

Amendment of the franchise, however necessary

as between party and party, is somewhat beside the point ; for if the electorate as a whole is in any case to be exploited, its precise composition is of secondary importance. Nor can a greater stringency of the laws against bribery and corruption, though possibly useful, do much to check the wholesale exploitation of mind by methods that legislation can hardly touch. Mr. Wallas observes that elections and jury-trials have undergone a like modification. Whereas at first they were designed merely to register opinions already formed, they now aim at the formation of opinion under favourable conditions, as well as its subsequent registration. But though the conditions under which electoral opinion is formed are most imperfect, practical politicians cannot, he says very truly, 'be expected to stop in the middle of a campaign merely because they have an uncomfortable feeling that the rules of the game require re-stating and possibly re-casting.'

Nevertheless, could not the experiment be tried, preferably in a see-saw constituency, of an equalized, or fair-play, election in which every effort should be made to form and obtain the opinion of the electors under the best conditions possible, instead of, as at present, the worst



conditions legal ? The two candidates would need to be not only good friends personally—they usually are, of course—but sincerely determined to carry out the experiment fairly, and to make their local organizations do the same. In the first place, they would agree either to forgo or to equalize the adventitious vote-catching advantages possessed by either side. They would spend the same, hold the same number of meetings, and share motor-cars. One or more referees, non-partisan and trusted by both parties, might be appointed to decide disputed matters. They would also decide, for instance, whether or no a poster was too misleading for use, and would forbid the circulation of leaflets containing obvious misstatements of fact. At joint preliminary meetings (if most of their meetings were not held in common) both candidates would state the rules of the contest and try to stimulate interest in it ; would impress upon the political workers their desire that the rules should be kept with goodwill, and their disapproval of any underhand work for either party. As far as possible the partisan clergy of all denominations would be induced to use their influence on behalf of fair play. Newspapers could not be kept out of the constituency, but their irrational influence

might be minimized. Help from the big central political organizations would be declined. The candidates and their workers would themselves undertake to explain their views to the electors. 'Make up your mind, and vote which way you think !' would be the election-cry of both sides.

An experiment on those lines, carried out with tact and good-humour, emphasis being laid throughout on the idea of fair play, need not necessarily prove a failure, especially if the sporting instinct of the constituency, and its pride in being chosen, could be fully roused—if, in schoolboy phrase, it were put upon its honour. Still less need the contest be dull. On the contrary, it would be interesting both to take part in and to watch ; and, in so far as it proved successful, it would afford valuable data as to the people's capacity to be reasoned with, together with many practical hints towards the improvement of our electoral system. Although outside the lines of party action, the experiment would yet be worth the parties' while to try, for the sake of that representative democracy on which their own existence depends. One thing is certain : the people are capable of voting far more reasonably than they are allowed

to do ; and in proportion as the party leaders are patriotic and sincere, and convinced of the rightness of their principles, so they will welcome any device to give effect to, and increase, the political rationality that exists.

## 15. BY-PRODUCTS OF TARIFF REFORM

BECAUSE working men form the bulk of the electorate, so much attention has been given to wheedling their votes out of them for one party or the other, that their real political opinions—their opinions, that is to say, on political subjects when they are not talking, or do not realize they are talking, politics—have been almost entirely neglected. Though merging into one another, the two things, working-class political opinion and working-class party opinion, are not only very different, but become more so. The one is a matter of class ; the other a matter of party. Many a time I have heard a number of men agreeing perfectly together on some political subject, until a chance mention of Conservatism or Liberalism, or a party catchword, has instantly roped them into two groups, hotly opposed to

each other on precisely the same subject. In the first instance, their political opinion was uppermost; in the second their party opinions—the opinions they take to the polling-booth. Newspapers neither reflect nor form that political opinion. They do not even form party opinion; they merely, it seems, provide material for its formation: to judge by the results of the last three General Elections in face of a Conservative Press enormously the superior in fighting weight, advocating and condemning, hip-hooraying and mud-slinging, to suit all tastes. Working-class political opinion possesses no newspapers; no means whatever of publishing itself. It is inarticulate, except among working people. Where working men find themselves by themselves, at street corners, in bars and tap-rooms, in railway carriages, at work, or in small kitchen living-rooms, there they talk and discuss and argue unceasingly. But let an educated man intrude. At once the discussion comes to an end. Shyness, mistrustful of its powers and conscious of its disadvantages, suspicion which fears to give itself away, or politeness which tries to say what will please, removes the very atmosphere itself in which working people can express themselves freely.



Preserving always the distinction between political and party opinion, it is as great a mistake to suppose that elections express the real political opinion of the electorate, as it is to suppose that the more intelligent working man must necessarily be either a Liberal or a Conservative. Elections express party opinion ; no more ; and that very incompletely. It is not the object of party organizers to find out opinion ; they aim at swaying and moulding it. The game is, to catch votes at all costs. Upbringing, tradition, surroundings, religion, family, friends, work—all sorts of considerations and associations, besides political opinion, attach a man to one party or the other. And no one, who reflects for a moment on how his educated acquaintances have come to belong to their respective parties, and also on how often they simply lift their opinions from their favourite newspapers, will feel inclined to crow over working men because, at elections, they belie themselves.

It is no dishonour to be a ‘doubtful voter,’ however great an annoyance to party workers ; and working people in their habit of sticking to a man once he has become popular, even though he change party himself, conform much more nearly

to the theory of representative government than do those strong party politicians who would make unwavering principles out of a Conservatism or a Liberalism constantly on the change. During the height of the last General Election I happened to go from a constituency where I live with working people into a similar constituency where most of the people I know are educated, some of them very highly. The difference was striking, and I am bound to say that in the qualities of tolerance, humour, open-mindedness, readiness to listen to both sides, and absence of petty personalities, the working people were very far ahead. Among them, though we talked ourselves hoarse on politics, I met with not one unpleasantness. 'We'm on opposite sides,' I was told, 'but that don't make us no bad friends, after that. 'Tain't worth it!' And they argued largely from life and experience, wrongly interpreted, perhaps, but at any rate first-hand. With the other people, to differ on politics was to rouse ill-feeling at once, and it brought into line against one a whole battery of cheap second-hand newspaper arguments. Political, as opposed to party, opinion hardly seemed to exist. Party feeling swamped everything. Certainly the working people were so keenly alive to electioneering

bunkum that they cared less for any party, but after allowing for that, I had, and still have, doubts as to which class, politically speaking, was the more educated.

It has become a newspaper pastime to compare the election returns from different parts of the country, and to say that the intelligent industrial workers of one county are brightly faithful to progress, while the equally intelligent workers of another industrial centre are stupidly loyal to reaction. Or the other way round—it doesn't matter. Election returns do, no doubt, indicate party opinion ; but surely not general intelligence, let alone those deeper, subtler forms of intelligence which remain untouched by electioneering. A much better indication of the trend of political opinion among working people can be obtained by comparing the attitude of different generations in any part of the country. 'It must be a long time before the vote of the agricultural labourers can represent anything better than the views of those who happen to dominate over them for the time being,' wrote Dr. Jessopp in the 'eighties.<sup>1</sup> So now, one still hears from old men : ' 'Tis right enough, what I'm saying. A gen'leman told me so.'

<sup>1</sup> *Arcady : For Better for Worse*, by Augustus Jessopp, D.D.

‘G’out wi’ your gen’lemen !’ replies a more independent generation. ‘Gen’lemen don’t know everything. They’ll tell up ort for to make ’ee believe that they wants ’ee to. ’Tis like this, I tell thee. . . . I see’d it on the newspaper.’

‘Hell about your newspapers !’ bursts out a still younger man with a mind of his own, as often as not a staunch Conservative by party. ‘They all of ’em wants for to lord it over ’ee, don’ ’em, an’ cow ’ee down, an’ keep ’ee down under, so’s we fools can work for ’em while they goes round in motor-cars on the profits of our labour? We asks for proper pay, and they offers us outdoor relief !’

Not once or twice, but day after day, have I heard conversations like that. The three men represent three well-defined stages in working-class political opinion : the stage of subjection, the stage of suspicion with its twin credulity, and the stage of revolt. And yet, at elections, the working classes divide themselves into two parties which more or less defeat each other for the benefit of those who call the tune !

Partly, no doubt, because he sticks to the job in hand, which is to vote either Liberal or Conservative, and in part because neither party offers

him what he really wants, the working man is extraordinarily slow in coupling together his party and his political opinions. He thinks one way, and votes another. I do not know a single working man who would not applaud Mr. Lloyd George's City Temple Speech, provided the name and party of the speaker were unknown. Its broad contrasts, almost Biblical in their simplicity, between wealth and poverty, Dives and Lazarus ; its fellow-feeling for those 'down under' ; its impatience with the endless tinkering up of social wrongs ; its call for justice, not as between rich and poor, but between man and man ; its recognition that we were all born the same way and have but a life to live ; its insistence, in other words, on the primary facts of life—that is exactly the working-class point of view. But say that the speech was Mr. Lloyd George's ; say it at election time ; and instantly half the men who approved of it would be up in arms against it with all the force of their party bias.

It is a case again of party opinion masking political opinion, temporarily ; for though party opinion, once roused, is more active, the deeper permanent feeling of the working people is to be found in their political, and not in their party,



opinions. In their political opinions they are all together. In their party opinions they are divided. Political opinion is a matter of class and class-experience ; it bears closely on the hard facts of life ; and it has behind it the fellow-feeling that exists between those who live from hand to mouth, and who work for masters. But party divisions are created by outsiders—for their own ends, in the opinion of most working men—and by outsiders the feeling between parties is artificially kept on the boil. Political opinion is most like a ferment, working always throughout the mass, yet seldom coming to the top. Party opinion is its froth. In so far as the people govern themselves, under our present party system, they are governed by their froth. And in so far as their political opinion gains the upper hand of their party opinions, so, in politics, class divisions will take the place of party divisions, and it will become increasingly difficult to divide the working classes against themselves.

But although, in order to understand what is brewing, it is very necessary to keep clear the difference between political and party opinion, there is this connection between them, that from the political opinions of to-day the party opinions

of the future are sooner or later made. In the long run, therefore, political opinion is the more important as well as the more fundamental. And for those who collect their impressions of politics up and down the country, from the electors themselves instead of from newspapers and party workers, the most striking change of the last few years has been the amazing growth among working people of a more definite political opinion. While two elections have yielded, let us say, disappointing results in comparison with the issues at stake, working people have been weighing things up on their own account. While politicians have been telling them more loudly than ever before what to think, they have been thinking for themselves. The conclusions they appear to have come to are most disrespectfully different from those that were expected of them. Outwardly as quiet as usual, strikes excepted, among themselves they are fermenting with dissatisfaction, and they no longer look, as they did, to either party for a remedy. Bidden to attack the politicians of the opposite party, they show an awkward disposition to attack them all, or to take less heed of them. Political opinion has advanced by such strides that it threatens to

make itself heard even above party opinion. The change in political tone is still greater.

During the election of January 1910, a very enthusiastic Tariff Reformer of my acquaintance used to clinch his harangues with 'Chamberlain's the man ! You trust Joe, and you won't go far wrong.'

'Get along !' he was chaffed. 'Chamberlain's one of your damn'd old Radicals. Always was !'

Whereupon he whipped round on his opponents. 'That don't make no difference,' he asserted. 'Joe *is* a Radical. I knows it. And if Joe's a Radical, so be I ; and I'm going to vote for Joe's policy !'

He was nearer the mark than he knew. The rapid growth among working people of a political opinion that is separate from, and almost independent of, party opinions, is largely traceable to the Tariff Reform controversy. Since he joined the Conservative party, Mr. Chamberlain has, in effect, done more for true Radicalism than ever he did in his own Radical days ; for in the proper, though not in the party, sense of the word *Radical*—in the sense that means root reform, a questioning of things right down to their foundations from an absolutely democratic point of view—the working-

class political opinion, which he has done most to quicken, is thoroughly Radical in temper. Political schemes have frequently strange by-products. The main product of the Tariff Reform agitation, if it is successful, will be a victory for the Conservative party. But its by-products are likely to prove more important than either Tariff Reform or Free Trade, and may easily involve the destruction of both political parties, as we now know them.

States of mind, changes and trends of opinion, among large masses of people are notoriously difficult to ascertain—to catch on the wing, as it were, and to fasten down in plain statements—additionally so among working people whose only form of publicity is talk. The whole of the evidence can never be gathered together, and against that which can be brought, contrary examples are nearly always obtainable. Opinion is fluid. Feeling is mostly subconscious. To try and arrest either is like scooping up water in a net. One *feels* the change; the change in direction and speed; and one *feels* the change in feeling. To find out exactly what is taking place, and why, is another matter. But just as bubbles rising through the water show that

something is happening below, and show, too, which way the tide is flowing, so the chance sayings one hears, especially when people are off their guard, give a fairly sound impression of what is at the back of their minds, as likely as not half-hidden from themselves. And there is this much as a guide : if one hears spoken around one things which could not have been said a few years ago, then one knows that changes of opinion and feeling must certainly have taken place ; and though one cannot tell the precise extent of the change, one can at all events guess whither it tends. When, last December, I asked a barful of Conservatives, flushed with their success at the poll, how much they thought their member had paid to his party funds for so safe a seat ; and when, instead of blacking my eye, they fell to discussing the point as cynically as a party journalist at lunch, and suggested means less creditable still, and roundly condemned the whole party system—then I knew that their member was no longer a little god to them, and that their progress in political disillusionment was well advanced. The very commonly expressed hope, that either one party or the other—it didn't much matter which—would go in by a big majority,



and really do something, pointed again in the same direction ; and so did the phrases that I must have heard scores of times during the election : ‘ They ’ m all in clique together up to Parliament. They ’ m both sides so bad as one another. And we ’ m the fools for supporting of ’ em at it ! ’

Strangest of all, and rich in possibilities, is the attitude which has grown up towards Socialism. As such, and under its own name, Socialism makes little, if any, progress. The word *Socialist* is still a lump of political mud, handy to throw at any opponent ; just as twenty years ago the word *Atheist* was, and as twenty years hence some other word will be. But socialistic ideas, under any other name, or no name at all, seem to have made astonishing headway among the working men of both parties, so much so that even the word itself is becoming somewhat less of a boggy. Last year I lent a copy of *The Camel and the Needle’s Eye* to one of the strongest Conservatives I know. In that book Mr. Arthur Ponsonby holds that there is a Problem of Riches just as much as a Problem of Poverty ; that the causes of both are as much moral as economic ; that extreme poverty is a necessary consequence

of extreme wealth; and that the subservience of the poor to the money ideal does but add to their own poverty by bolstering up the power and wastefulness of the rich. He sets down with striking effect a number of contrasting budgets of rich households and poor families—his standpoint being ‘A man’s a man for a’ that.’ Mr. Lloyd George might have read the book before making his City Temple speech.

My friend gloried in the book. ‘That’s reckoned ’em up right enough,’ he said, ‘and it reckons up our sort too, and serve us right!’ He talked about it at his political club, where, being sure of his vote, the party wirepullers dubbed him Socialist. But not with the effect they wanted. He refused to be scared by a word into the strait gate and narrow way of official Conservatism. ‘If that there book’s Socialism,’ he said, ‘then I’m damn’d if I bain’t a Socialist. But ’t isn’t. He’s told ’em off proper, and there ought to be more books like it. ’Tis perfectly right, what thic chap says.’

(But it wasn’t Conservatism all the same.)

Very shortly afterwards I was present while some country working men, not trade unionists, were talking about their wages.

‘We don’t get our fair share,’ said one.

‘Certainly the master’s got the capital and we haven’t,’ added another, ‘and there wouldn’t be no work for us without his capital. . . .’

‘Yes, we knows all that. But ’tis us earns him the interest on his capital, and in sharing up the profits us gets too little for our labour, and he gets too much for his capital: and it ought to be put a stop to.’

‘Most people,’ I remarked by way of a joke, ‘would say you were talking Socialism.’

To my astonishment he retorted: ‘I knows we be. All of us working men are Socialists nowadays in things like that. Only I dare say we shall vote Conservative, us that’s here, after that.’

The others present nodded their approval.

Ten years ago a conversation like that would have been impossible. It can only mean, not simply that the opinions of those men have changed, but that the opinions around them, of the class they belong to, whose feelings they share, have also changed. One knows that it is so by a multitude of conversational touches too light and fleeting for recollection, except as a general impression. And it is within a remarkably short space of time that working people have become

highly Socialistic in money matters, though not, it may be noted, in other respects. The theoretical aspects of Socialism do not appeal to them, and they resent as much as ever any State interference in their private lives. Bureaucrats they mistrust : a chill Fabian efficiency has no attractions for them. What they want is fair play between man and man.

As illustrations of change, I have purposely chosen out of many small episodes those in which Conservatives figured ; for it is among Conservatives that the change is most noticeable. Whether Tariff Reform, in that it involves State control of trade, is a Socialistic scheme, for the benefit, or not, of the capitalist—that is an interesting question. Certainly most Tariff Reformers, when one points out possible causes of failure, will propose very Socialistic safeguards, if only their pet scheme can be made to work. And it is equally certain that the Tariff Reform agitation has brought Socialistic ideas into common currency.

It could not very well have been otherwise. For what happened ? What was almost bound to happen ?

To put it shortly, the working classes have been made aware of the existence of economics. Before

the Tariff Reform agitation they were more than ignorant of economics ; they were unaware of its existence. Still less did they understand its terms and arguments. The average working man, for instance, could not have read Mr. Norman Angell's powerful economic plea for international peace. It would have been Double Dutch to him. But now he could read it, and doubtless will, if it is circulated properly. Working people, then, had a sentiment about politics where now they are gaining a more or less reasoned view. Board of Trade returns they did not read. Exports and Imports did not interest them. Of the interdependence of the world's markets they had no knowledge. It would have been useless to talk to them about productive and unproductive labour. Trusts, they innocently thought, belonged to America, and were nobody else's business. Capital and labour were vague terms, much used in trade-union speeches, but not brought home to each man as things that make a difference to his Sunday's dinner. The working man's view of finance went very little further than the coin that could be handled and changed, and his main idea was, that money must be circulated somehow. Hence the familiar process of nursing constituencies by spend-



ing money in them. The rich were supposed to have done their whole duty if they spent their money freely, no matter how they used it, no matter how they acquired it, no matter what sources of profit to the community they kept locked up for their own sport and pleasure.

Then Mr. Chamberlain sprang Tariff Reform upon the country. Several of the Conservative newspapers pooh-poohed it, but by purchase or otherwise were brought into line. Since a Unionist proposed the scheme, Liberals of course opposed it ; that is to say, they opposed it from the first and produced their reasons afterwards. The attempt to hustle the country into Protection failed ; and it may be remarked that while the Yellow Press is admirable for hustling, its support appears to tell against, rather than for, any scheme which cannot be hustled through quickly. Tariff Reform was said to be a subject so complex that only experts could deal with it. But unfortunately the experts were also Liberals and Conservatives. They fell out ; and where experts disagreed, the ordinary man took liberty to do the same.

He started arguing, and with abundant help he went on arguing. If he had no arguments they were speedily supplied him. Much money and

many reputations were at stake. Tariff Reform and Free Trade had become vested interests, with the fighting power of vested interests. Both parties made the mistake of pitching their arguments too low. They appealed overmuch to self-interest ; which is always a dangerous expedient when sentiment will do the work ; for sentiments exhaust themselves, making room for others, whereas self-interest grows by feeding on itself, and in time becomes unruly. The working man is not so ungenerous as politicians suppose. Beer and baccy are good, but he possesses some ideas beyond them. If the country needs more money, he does not mind paying his share, so long as it *is* his share. The most influential Tariff Reformers among working men have been those who said, ‘I don’t suppose Tariff Reform will do *me* any good ; very likely ’twill make things dearer for me ; but if ’twill make work for those poor beggars of unemployed. . . .’

In their haste to win, the politicians continued their reckless move of initiating the working men into the high and hitherto respected mysteries of wealth. They forgot one thing : namely, that although he was party to the struggle, he was also a spectator, grown critical, moreover. Each

side pulled to pieces the wealthy men of the other side. Mr. Patten was good enough to show how millionaires corner the necessities of life. 'Haven't us always said,' remarked the working man, 'that if you robs people of thousands of pounds, you gets rich and you're thought the better of ; but if one of our sort steals a shilling or two, then they locks 'em up pretty quick.' In their anxiety not only to pay increased taxation, but to make a little profit out of it for their famous widows and orphans, the brewers betrayed their traditional friendship for the working man. At the polls he stood by them much as before, but no longer in total ignorance of over-capitalization and tied-house jugglery. Rich men cried, 'Ruin !' They were not, however, observed to be rearing half a dozen children on a pound a week. On the contrary, their motor-cars, which cost money, were overrunning the highways. Landlords cried, 'Wreck and robbery !' But how many men love their landlord, or pity him ?

Thus the first great by-product of Tariff Reform was a general acquiescence in Mr. Lloyd George's Budget. Men fought about it while there was fighting to do, but after it had become law they troubled no more ; and neither the efforts

of the Land Union nor a long procession of scarecrows labelled *Socialist* succeeded in rousing them afresh. 'Aye!' was the verdict, 'make them pay as can.'

'But,' croaked the old guard, 'they'll simply pass on their taxation to you, and you'll be worse off than ever.'

'No, they won't,' was the reply. 'Not all of it; and if they do pass most of it on, what they can't pass on 'll be so much to the good. Besides, if they can pass the whole of it on, like you say, what need have they got for to kick up such a fuss about it?'

It is doubtful whether Mr. Lloyd George has ever sufficiently thanked Mr. Chamberlain for help rendered in passing the Budget. No amount of school education could so quickly have educated the people, and, still better, could have set them so hard at work educating themselves. Needless to say, they have not become very expert economists. On the contrary, they are as yet in the first stage, and many are as blissfully ignorant of economics as ever they were. But the lump is leavened. A lively political opinion has been created over and above party opinion. Once aware of economics, and aware also that it has a close bearing on every

man's life, the working classes may be trusted to follow up their new-found knowledge. And if they don't call it economics, or even know it as such—what does it matter, so long as they know what they want ?

In spite of the fact that the Liberals, always more solicitous for political than for personal liberty, and wagged as usual by their Non-conformist tail, turned aside twice at least—in the temperance clauses of the Licensing Bill and in the Children Act—to indulge their old bad habit of messing about with people's morals and private lives, they have been twice returned at the polls by majorities which, under the circumstances, showed more dissatisfaction with both parties than trust in either. By discrediting each other, by playing parliamentary tactics with the enthusiasm they had called into being, politicians have combined to discredit both themselves and their game in the eyes of the working-man spectator. A widespread impatience with parties and politicians is another by-product of Tariff Reform.

As with football, the greater part of the players have become lookers-on, willing to cheer or laugh, but not to exert themselves. Not until there arises a politician, in close touch with working



people, who can weld together the dissatisfactions of their political opinion, and hammer it into a constructive policy, feeling with them and making them feel in turn that their needs and hardships are at last understood—not until then, and not unless that happens, will all the by-products of Tariff Reform be fully revealed in action. The action itself may quite possibly be violent, as the explosion of bottled-up feelings commonly is ; and what exactly will happen in the stage of little knowledge, no one can foretell. People in a ferment, however great their knowledge, do not act very reasonably, least of all when resentment spurs them on.

## 16. LABOUR AND BRAIN WORK

‘’Tis bound to come, I tell thee,’ a working-man friend was saying the other day. ‘They’m giving this here education to kids what an’t got nothing for to back it up, an’ that don’t make ’em no happier, nor no more satisfied with the job they got to do. If you’m educated, you wants to be able to live educated ; an’ the likes o’ us can’t. Us an’t got the rivets [money]. But the likes o’ they there starch-collar articles, what tries to lord it over ’ee, an’ shove ’ee off with what pay they’m minded, they bain’t going to always have it all their own way. Our sort of people’s getting more enlightened, an’ they travels about an’ sees more, an’ one of these days they’m going to inquire into it proper ; an’ when they do there’ll be a bigger bust-up than ever was—you see !’

The point of the outburst lay in the fact that the speaker was not a Radical, but an active

Conservative, untouched by Socialist propaganda ; a man who reads almost exclusively the cheaper Conservative newspapers. What he said he had seen and thought out for himself. At the same time he was summing up countless discussions among his mates. For among working men there is no subject more often discussed than the relation between 'they there starch-collar articles' and 'the likes o' us,' between, that is, capital and labour in the wider sense ; no subject on which they are more agreed (when they are not aware they are talking politics) ; no subject which brings out more force and bitterness of feeling. I notice the same thing wherever I have working-class friends ; and among the working people who come from all parts of the country to the seaside town where I live ; and even among bluejackets home on leave. In matters of feeling especially, there exists among working people a freemasonry almost unaffected by differences in work, environment, and politics ; deriving its power from common memories, common experiences of hardship, a common precariousness of life ; and hardly to be recognized till one knocks one's head against it. 'He's like a fellow's self—They've a-cowed him down too—*He* knows what 'tis like—He've

a-know'd what 'tis to go short—He's been through the hoop!'—that is introduction enough, no matter where the man comes from; you may speak before him as you never would before a 'gen'leman'; you may count on his sympathy against 'the likes o' they.'

There is, of course, a strong unconscious freemasonry on the other part. I am astonished how often my educated acquaintances expect me to side against my working friends, on demand, because I have been through the school and University mill. Quite frequently I am questioned in such a way that I can only reply, 'The man you are talking about is a friend of mine.' And then, an awkward silence.

Disunited on most subjects, easy to set at sixes and sevens, working people are curiously at one within the bounds of their informal freemasonry. It is when a grievance of theirs is brought within its scope that they become what is called dangerous. Then they will fight for an idea or a sentiment, and hold together. Labour unrest, the spontaneity of some recent strikes, are not the only signs that the economic questions of capital and labour and wages are becoming matters of feeling, and, therefore, sooner or later, of action. Trade

unions are supposed to represent the most advanced working men ; but while the trade unions have been spending their energies in political action, working people generally have advanced a step further. Silently, so far as the reading public is concerned, they have been learning to question the whole of the present system of wages and earnings and social position. They do question it, now, with a growing resentment. As my friend said, 'twas bound to come.

The notion that a man should do his duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call him, or his betters to allot him, and there alone find happiness ; the pious jingle—

God bless the squire and his relations  
And keep us in our proper stations !—

both are obsolete nowadays. Rather than better his own state of life, every man desires some other state of life, if not for himself, at any rate for his children. Nor are we often told that a man is most likely to find happiness by doing his duty in that state of life for which his nature fits him. Still less often does well-done manual labour meet with unpatronizing honour. If a man's nature fits him for labour, and he does it, there will be plenty to turn up their noses at him and his soiled



hands, and to call him 'that man.' If he does a starch-collar job, there will be plenty to touch their caps and call him 'Sir.' By all means possible the working man has been urged to better himself—to better himself materially. What real betterment is, no one has told him. Who can? Only one thing is certain, namely, that material betterment costs money, that it needs more wages. Hygiene, improved housing, education, public recreation; they all cost money, not only to the nation, but to those who are bettered in those respects, and who have hardly a penny to spare. Small wonder the working man concludes: 'It's the rivets we wants!' He does want the rivets, now more than ever. In effect, the educated have been saying to the uneducated: 'You make a mess of life. So do we. But hurry up and make a mess of life our way, which is the superior way; and then you'll be all right.' And the main difference is, that the so-called superior way costs more money. That, or nearabout, is what another friend of mine means when he says: 'Times be altered, but things is just the same. We has more, but us bain't no better off. An' I tell 'ee, always 'twill be!' Wealth in its motor-cars is conspicuous

everywhere. Clever advertisement dangles what he cannot afford before every man's eyes. Education, with its large promise and small fulfilment, and the ache it gives for soft polite jobs; the press with its ingrained snobbery; preachments of self-help and tales of gutter-born millionaires; the theory of giving every child its chance of everything; heightened standards of living; the rush for sensational pleasure, usually on the other side of a pay-box—all have combined to rouse the working man's ambition to fever-heat; while the means of satisfying his ambition, they linger. The specially talented, or strong, or lucky, have an improving chance, but for the average man life is more than ever a case of 'Devil take the hindmost!' Meanwhile, the risk of unemployment dogs most savagely those who have least to fall back upon. And unfortunate human beings still starve in the midst of plenty. (Never mind if they have been foolish: starvation means death; an empty belly is bad enough.) The working man is, if anything, less able to satisfy the reasonable needs of himself and his family, let alone satisfy his ambitions; the needs and ambitions, I mean, which he has been encouraged, or even forced, to acquire. Wages have not gone up in

proportion. Hence his bitter complaint : ‘ You works an’ slaves an’ worries, an’ never gets no for’arder. You do get five bob a week to die on, come you’m seventy, if you ever are. An’ the likes o’ they, they lords it over ’ee, ’cause they got the coin. An’ when you tries to explain yourself, they cross-examines ’ee, an’ twistis ’ee up in knots, ’cause they’ve been able to buy the education for to do it with. An’ when you’d like to tell ’em how you feels, you got to bite your tongue, ’cause the coin’s at their disposal. An’ who the hell be ’em? We was all born the same way, wasn’t us, an’ ’ll all be buried, an’ us all wants to live ? ’

In that very characteristic speech the two leading causes of the trouble reveal themselves side by side. For the question of wages and earnings, though capable, in books, of economic treatment, is not in life a purely economic matter. It is nothing so simple. No doubt the reason of the grievance is a stark inequality of reward for different kinds of work, but the driving force behind the grievance is social and personal—a matter of feeling and class-friction. The labourer’s self is even more hurt than his pocket. He sees that the brain-worker is paid on a different scale

altogether ; that the professional man, though he calls himself poor, lives pretty well ; that the negotiator is still more highly paid ; that the organizer exacts a heavy toll for arranging other people's labour ; that the manipulator of money and of the necessities of life stands to make a huge fortune ; while he himself is lucky if he merely lives, with few of the comforts and pleasures which the brain-worker takes as of right, and with nothing to look forward to after all his work except a still poorer old age. He sees all that plainly enough, but it is the calm assumption of superior worth on the part of the 'likes o' they,' or the more offensive holding of their own on the part of half-bred people, which drives it home. And as for the 'proud stuck-up ways' of the minor brain-workers and the starch-collared poor, the clerks and shop people, they are a byword. 'Suppose,' says the labourer—and I give it in the form most familiar to me—'Suppose their education did cost 'em more. . . . They had the money, hadn' 'em, or their fathers had ? Do 'ee think *my* chil'ern couldn't be educated up to it if I had the money ? They says their sort of work's worth more'n ours ; p'raps 'tis ; but wi'out our labour they couldn't

live at all. 'Tis the fruits of our labour they lives on, an' the little you gets they grudges 'ee. They tells 'ee you don't live expensive. Course you don't! They says you an't got no position to keep up. Course you an't! Nor not always enough to eat neither! You can't afford it. 'Tisn't that us wants what they got, but us do want to be able to live a little bit thereafter. Us bain't book-learnt, but I'm hanged if us don't know life. An' yet they looks down on 'ee, an' treats 'ee like the scum of the earth, 'cause you does what they can't—labours. *Dirty!* they calls 'ee, 'cause you can't afford a nice house an' servants to keep it clean. *Rough!* because you wears working clothes an' swears a bit, which there isn't any harm in it. *Drunkard!* 'cause you has a glass too much once in a way—as if you don't want it, an' they don't have it too in their private houses. *Loafer!* because you chucks up the game, which you knows you can't win anyhow. *Scoundrel!* *Criminal!* when you'm drove beyond yourself an' smashes up your happy home or brings the police down on 'ee. Lord! if a chap had their money an' summut to fall back on. . . . You can't but work so many hours a day and do your best, an' them that



works most hours gets least pay. They sort works, an' they gets what they do get, or gets it wi'out working ; but *us* works an' us don't get what us don't ! How'd they like to never get no further in advance ? They'd chuck it up ! There isn't no getting out o'it, they've a-got 'ee down under, an' there they means to keep 'ee. P'raps 'tis their ignorance ; p'raps 'tish't ; but we'm all flesh an' blood, after that, an' we all got feelings.'

Let me repeat that such speeches are not Socialistic rant, but the everyday talk of hard-working men who have never come into contact with Socialism. I am not trying here to say how far the working man is right or wrong ; but only to convey his feeling and to trace its causes. The average working man is as scared of Socialism by name as the two great political parties are. Yet it is hardly too much to say that whilst the great political parties have been passing Socialistic legislation, mostly of a repressive kind, without meaning to, so the working man has been becoming a Socialist in economics without knowing it ; without, indeed, knowing that economics exist.

Unfortunately there is no standard by which

to judge the wage value of different sorts of work. The market value and the real value of labour can hardly be distinguished. Responsibility (which working people usually undervalue), business ability, and the power to command, cannot be expressed in terms of pounds, shillings, and pence, nor yet the chance of using those gifts when a man possesses them. Two things stand out plain before the labourer's eyes—a gross inequality in rewards for work and also a mortifying social inequality founded largely upon the first inequality. And of one other thing I am certain: it is not possible to understand the labourer's feeling in the matter without doing his labour, living his life, and knowing his weariness. One cannot feel by proxy. To have gone through the hoop is a phrase—and an experience—very full of meaning.

That manual occupations command less pay for longer hours, with fewer holidays, than those involving more mental work is the main and evident point. It is after the main point has been conceded, when one comes to consider individual cases and general remedies, that the complications of the subject begin to unwind themselves

endlessly. So vast an amount of human struggle and emotion, so much of what is called human nature, are bound up with the plain question of wages, modify it, and again are modified by it, that economics and sociology, with their statistical reckonings, can but touch the fringes of it. And comparative *data* for dealing with the more human sides of the question are almost wholly lacking.

The labourer's grievance cannot be fully appreciated without experience of the labourer's life. Upon that point working men insist, and rightly. To take part in their life is nothing short of a revelation. One finds oneself looking out upon the world with other eyes. At the same time, as I have said, the grievance itself is twofold—financial and social, a matter of pay and still more a matter of feeling. Because the labourer earns less he is compelled to live more humbly, and for both reasons is treated as an inferior. To poverty indignity is added. Here, immediately, in the need for personal experience of both brain work and labour, we are met by this difficulty: it is rare enough for a man to do both kinds of work, as work, day after day; but it is far rarer for a man to occupy at once the two social positions corresponding with the two

kinds of work. Everything tends to make the one work into his business and the other into a hobby. Everybody unites to drive him into the one social position or the other. It is astonishing how strong and persistent those forces are.

The real value, as opposed to the current market value, of different kinds of work raises yet another crop of difficulties. Work that is one man's grind is another man's pleasure ; and the value of a day's work to an employer, or to the community, is proportional neither to the amount of effort put into it by the worker nor to his degree of fatigue at the end of the day. Some forms of work are quickly fatiguing or unhealthy, others more wearing in the long run. Work that few men can, or in any circumstances could do, commands frequently but by no means always a scarcity wage, especially if it be brain work. Looking at the question entirely from the worker's standpoint, we find that he may value his work either by the time occupied over it—in other words by his loss of personal liberty (a valuation which depends very greatly on whether the work is congenial or not)—or he may value it according to the fatigue it produces in him ; or else by the social position it gives him. And, in addition, all

sorts of individual oddities have their part in his valuation.

*Ultimately, of course, work is a giving of life, one way or another, in return for the means of more life than could otherwise be obtained—in return, that is to say, not only for the means of living, but for the means of living more fully.* It is, or ought to be, a putting out of one's life at interest. Civilization may be described as a heightening of that process, urged on always, at an incalculable cost to humanity, by mankind's fundamental desire for life, more life, a life more keenly conscious of itself. And in the end the labourer's grievance comes to this : that in return for nearly the whole of his life he is able to obtain hardly, if anything, more than just the means to keep himself alive ; whereas the brain-worker, to say nothing of the moneyed man, can and does obtain a surplus of time and money, in which and with which to live more fully. Viewed so, the labourer's grievance acquires an altogether wider meaning. The inequality of which he complains is a defeat and a waste of civilization itself. It is bad political economy, and, worse still, it is bad racial economy.

Obviously it is not possible to work out in an accurate manner the bearing on labour and brain-



work of all the above considerations ; neither, indeed, is it necessary, provided their existence is borne in mind. Though they all add fuel to a smouldering discontent, though at one time or another I have heard nearly all of them debated among ordinary working men, we are certainly not yet in a position to fine the problem down so far. It is a field of inquiry which wants the plough before the spade and hoe are likely to be of much use. As a working man with whom I have been discussing this subject remarked, ‘ You can talk about all that till you’m mazed-headed, and no doubt ’twill all o’it have to be reckoned up some day ; but none of it don’t avoid this, that they gets overpaid, after the rate, for their brain-work and capital, and us get underpaid for our labour. And that you knows very well, wi’out any more chatter, seeing you’ve a-done both yourself.’

It happens that my own experience does include both brain-work and labour in two of their most fatiguing forms—namely, writing of a creative or fairly solid nature, and fishing, which has to be done in bursts of severe labour and exposure, with intermediate periods of very trying idleness. At both sorts of work I have earned my pay, and in connexion with both there has been a good deal of

business to do, and some rather ticklish negotiations to carry through, which provided experience of a third type of work. Meanwhile, I have lived in two classes of society, that of educated people and that of working people, but chiefly among the latter ; till their ways and sympathies and interests have become mine, and four or five years' prentice work as fisherman's mate and boatman have ended in a partial partnership. But so ingrained are class distinctions, so great the dissymmetry between brain-worker and labourer, that most people are simply unable to believe a man can be both with equal thoroughness and equal seriousness. One's manual work they insist on regarding as the hobby of a very eccentric man, or else, less often, one's trained intellect as an upstarting nuisance, and one's lack of respectfulness, of cap-touchings, sir-ings, and so forth as a rough fellow's impudence—a shocking example of what the working classes are coming to. At other times one is supposed to be a madman, or a freak, or a wealthy gentleman of low tastes. Well-meaning acquaintances urge me in all manner of ways, with all kinds of flattering half-truths, to break adrift from my working friends, now I have the 'copy,' now I have the health, now I have got what I can out of

them ; and it should be noted, too, that every one of those misunderstandings casts an implied, if unintentional, slur on working people.

To go back to work itself : after a man has done both sorts to the point of exhaustion—brain-work till the brain would neither work nor sleep, and labour until further exertion, instead of rousing and warming him, only made him drowsier and still more deadly cold—he ought to be in a fair position to judge between the two. Exhaustion, at any rate, is one basis of comparison. If, however, my aim were simply to make money, then I should do neither. At the expense of feeling sometimes a little soiled in spirit, business yields by far the biggest return for the least exertion, and business nowadays involves but little social inferiority. It demands neither the racking concentration of brain-work nor the bodily strength and fatigues of labour. Middlemen, for instance, make the most profit on the fisherman's labour, leaving him barely enough to keep him at it. Many publishers, we know, are constantly on the verge of bankruptcy ; but meantime they succeed in living at least as well as the authors in whose wares they deal. If a man's ambition is money-making, business gives him the largest scope and

calls, moreover, for smaller gifts of mind or body. As for its underlings, the clerks, assistants, and such-like, do they in comparison with professional and working-men—men of mental and manual skill—earn much less than their due? On the contrary, the purlieus of business provide a refuge for the empty-headed and the weak-kneed, those lacking in initiative or wanting safe soft jobs.

As between brain-work and labour, it is by no means so easy as it seems to judge which of the two is the more fatiguing and consequently entitled to shorter hours and more rest? Brain-work, I should say myself, but not by a great deal. With the object, apparently, of showing that labour is the easier, the *Times* has observed quite truly that : ‘The very fact that brain-workers do voluntarily seek recreation in violent muscular exertion is evidence that it comes easy to them. Do manual workers seek their recreation in correspondingly severe mental exertion? A few, perhaps, do, but to most any application is unspeakable toil, if not impossible.’ In reality the argument cuts as much the other way, though it needs an experience of labour to see it. Stevenson came near the right explanation when he said, in his essay on walking tours, that a man comes to his inn at night :

‘ With a sort of frost on his five wits, and a starless night of darkness in his spirit. . . . When it comes to honest [mental] work, when we come to gather ourselves together for an effort, we may sound the trumpets as loud and long as we please ; the great barons of the mind will not rally to the standard, but sit each one, at home, warming his hands over his own fire and brooding in his own private thought ! ’

For the truth is, that, whereas mental work fatigues the brain only, manual labour fatigues the body and the brain too ; and I have noticed that an excess of either results in exactly the same nervous distress. After coming in from fishing, fishermen often feel most blindly tired, and yet cannot easily get to sleep without a glass of hot grog, because their nerves are jumpy with fatigue. On the score of general fatigue the working man should be paid rather more than less. And hence his love for his pint or so of ‘ glorious beer ’ or strong tea. He wants a little life between working and sleeping, and only some stimulant can liven him up enough to take it. I find myself that to make the change from hard bodily labour to full mental work, or *vice versa*, occupies about



three days ; so that if either sort of work were daily and regular, I could not do both. How much more difficult must the transition be for a man untrained in the handling of mental material and tools !

Putting aside the fact that attention alone, for several hours on end, is a fatiguing form of brain-work, the amount of very real mental activity in nearly all forms of labour is much underestimated. Talk to what workman one will, even the unskilled labourer, about his job, and it is surprising how much judgment he has constantly to exercise ; only, as he will probably say, he cannot explain himself properly. The subtle judgment, amounting almost to instinct, of those who follow the oldest trades—agriculture, smithery, seamanship, fishing—is proverbial. It is said that fishermen must be bred, not made. Probably I know more *concerning* fishing than my mates do, but not more *of* fishing. What I find out by observation and reasoning, they know more surely by an inbred instinct. Where my skill is deliberate, theirs is a part of them. They are in the tradition of fishing. What would we not give to have men alive who were in the tradition of medieval cathedral building ? Yet we neglect, underpay, and allow to die

out the men we have, who are members of great traditions ; and because their learning is not mere book-knowledge they are called ignorant.

Taking the two types of work I know best—writing and fishing—although I may have doubts as to the exact amount of pay they each deserve, I have no doubt at all as to which is the better paid, and which provides money for rest and holidays. Heaven forbid I should say that writers are overpaid ! What I am sure of is that, on the same scale, fishermen, and indeed all labourers, are greatly underpaid, both in money and in rest. And worst of all, the manual worker or labourer has nothing but misfortune to look forward to ; he ‘never gets no for’arder’ ; which tends, in the bitterly true words of a working man who wrote to the *Times*, ‘to create and to foster a soul-destroying weariness.’

The social inequality adds insult to injury instead of doing something by way of compensation. People assume the working man’s inferiority without the least consciousness of doing so. But he, being the victim, is aware of it. Were we not from the very first, at a ‘school for the sons of clergymen and gentlemen,’ taught to despise the village ‘butties’ ? Was not a gentleman, last

summer, heard to ask his small son if he wouldn't like to be a sea-captain and have a lot of men under him to order about as he pleased? One evening, while several of us were standing on the sea-wall, we picked up a jewelled brooch. A gentleman who had been sitting near came forward, saying : 'That lady dropped that, who was patting your dog.'

'Yes,' we replied, 'we know it's hers. She'll be coming back this way and then we can give it to her.'

But although (as I found) he was unacquainted with the lady, he took the trouble to go after her and warn her that we had the brooch. In the absence of proof to the contrary, we men in jerseys were assumed to be dishonest.

On another occasion, a gentleman was deploring the Osborne College cadet case. 'A boy's life spoilt,' he said ; 'and they fought against any appeal !'

'Now,' I remarked, 'you can tell what it's like for a bluejacket in the Navy who hasn't any rich and influential friends.'

'Ah !' he replied, 'but a bluejacket hasn't got a career to lose like that young cadet.'

When I pointed out to him that a young blue-

jacket has just as much a career to lose and one life to spoil, he looked as if I had suddenly erected a five-bar gate in front of him. He hadn't thought of that !

Such tales would not be worth repeating were it not that they are everyday illustrations of a general and mostly unconscious attitude, to which working people are, if anything, over-sensitive, though as a rule they find it advisable not to say much at the time. Ignorance, they will admit, and not intention to hurt, is the prime cause ; and they themselves cannot be acquitted of a stand-offishness which makes good will very difficult to exercise. But they are probably following a sound instinct in attaching importance even more to hurt feelings than to poor wages, to the social rather than to the financial side of the grievance. Until labour receives its dues socially in people's minds, it is difficult to see how political or any other action can exact its due in wages.

## 17. A COUPLE OF SIDELIGHTS ON FISHING

### I. FISHERMEN'S LUCK

MEN not seen at work are seldom credited with the work they do. Deep-sea fishermen, like lifeboatmen, have stamped themselves upon people's imagination ; they go to sea in gales. But longshore fishermen need moderate weather for their work in open boats, and it is a great grievance amongst them that they are thought to earn money easily, because, occasionally, they make a good haul in a short time, and because they spend many hours of the day, between whiles, with their hands in their pockets, looking out to sea. If you want to insult such a man, tell him he must have been making a small fortune. The best-meaning people do it.

One morning, of a shuffling summer, a kindly visitor who had found us idle down by the boats



(he was the editor of a Temperance newspaper), asked three or four of us to have a drink, and led the way to the nearest public-house. Rain-water and sea-water drained out of our clothes into pools upon the bar-floor. We called for hot grog. But we could not settle down to it ; we kept on going to the window to look out over ; for outside, across the Shore Road, the short steep seas of an August gale—all chop, and no ground-swell, soon up, soon gone—were fretting at the shingle beach, and threatening to wash away our boats. Squalls of wind and rain turned up the sea feather-white. Nothing could be done afloat. Nothing much had been done for some time.

‘Well,’ said the visitor, lifting his glass, ‘here’s luck ! You fellows seem to have a pretty easy time. I’ve not seen you do much since I’ve been down here. I suppose you’ve made enough.’

That set tongues a-wagging.

‘You an’t see’d us have no weather,’ said one.

‘And the fish an’t come into the bay like they have aforetime,’ added another.

‘If they was to, you’d see us out after ’em quick enough.’

‘And *you* wouldn’t see us, after that, ’cause you’d be lying snug in bed while we was hauling

and digging out there. Fishing's no good unless 'tis done by night.'

'Why?' demanded the visitor. 'Why can't you fish by day?'

'Cause fish is like other insects, I s'pose, and moves about by night. Very often, when you sees we hanging about all day, like you says, with our hands in our pockets, us been out all night and done more than a day's work—maybe for nort if us an't catched nort. Tell 'ee what: you come down in the winter and go herring drifting 'long with us, when 'tis blowing, and freezing, or snowing, and you got to lie in an open boat all night, wet all over, and freezed with the cold. Your sort comes once, sometimes, and says they enjoys it, but I takes partic'lar notice they don't often come twice, and never two nights following. But *us* got to go out there night after night, so long as there's anything to be catched and the weather's fit, or else you won't have no money in thic ol' stocking for when there's nort doing, and you've got to hang on tough. And whether you does ort or nort all depends on luck. That's what you can't alter; and that's what a fisherman's living is—luck. You may work, but luck comes first, and 'tis a thing that don't come to 'ee if

you'm not on the look-out for it. How'd you like to live on luck, sir, and rear up a family of childern on it?'

But the summer visitor drank up and went. And the man who had been blowing his hooter capped his speech with : 'Aye, I tell 'ee, that's what the likes o' they thinks. . . . They don't know how us got to watch, not for gain always, but only for the chance of working.'

'Hold thee row!' said another. ''Tisn't no use chattering. They won't believe 'ee. They can't. They'm too ignorant of what 'tis like.'

Whereupon we all drank up, and went out to the sea-wall to wait for luck.

There is no look-out so keen as the small fisherman's. Grey battleships, near the great ports and naval bases, keep watch and ward over the country and over the seas; and all the nation knows it, and sings *Rule Britannia*. Coastguards, posted round the shores, stand to be reprimanded if there is anything they fail to see. Lloyd's signalling stations, on the headlands, register the shipping that passes. Steam-trawlers and drifters sail out from the great fish-ports to the ocean fisheries: statistics are published of their work. But unnoticed, all along the coast, in every creek

and cove, and on nearly every beach, there are men on the look-out night and day, waiting for fisherman's luck. When the fish are there, and the weather is fit, they put to sea in innumerable small craft, enduring innumerable risks and hardships ; and for the purpose of earning money to feed their few mouths they bring ashore from the sea, which is no man's land, enormous quantities of food. On stretches of lonely shore, where thistles and reeds grow down to the water, and the shingle ridges are unbroken by the mark of footsteps, a boat or two can almost always be found, left there by men who have to work on land, because they cannot earn a full living from the sea, but who, when there is anything to catch, will turn their backs on the tilled fields and will go afloat. Their leaky old boats wait for them, and for their luck ; and sometimes they make a haul.

From the scattered work of small fishermen and the unorganization of their trade, there arises, in the large, an immense wastage of effort ; much work, more waiting (which is worse than work), and small returns ; yet, in detail, taking each fishery separately, the look-out is as minutely effective as sparrows' work in picking up crumbs on a hard morning. For the seasons when luck

holds off loom always ahead, and hunger, though a poor organizer, is a slave-driving foreman.

As impressive as the vaunted sea-power of England is the obscure multitude watching around the coast, waiting for luck with an old sea-knowledge at hand, and strength to do their furious bursts of work, and then to wait, and wait on, without disheartenment ; saying when luck is good, and when it is bad, too, in the words of Devon fishermen : ‘ Us have seed it aforetime, an’t us ? Aye ! an’ will again.’ Rocks and tide-races and ocean currents are charted for the great ships. But to these men every swirl of the tide at every time of it is known. The tumbled rocks are a lobster and prawn garden for some of them. Others are better acquainted with the bottom of the sea and the landmarks that must be taken for bringing up on the best fishing grounds. To the ceaseless changing of the sea—and only those who watch by day and night, for a living, know how infinite and definite those changes are—they oppose a ceaseless change of front and variety of skill. They know what to do—they hardly know why. They feel what must be done. Their experience and that of their forefathers has become an instinct. Therefore no man can learn fishing simply by



informing himself about it; for knowledge, however full, does not become instinctive in a day, nor yet in a generation.

It is not as if fishermen were honoured for doing a work that only they can do. It is not as if they were properly paid for their labour. Middlemen and buyers appropriate the greater part of fish profits. Delicate-handed folks who have never slept rough for a single night of their life, stroll along and say, 'Why, what's the matter with you? What are you grumbling about? You've only to throw your nets into the sea, and you pull them out full of fish.' Fishermen know otherwise. They know what it means to live 'twixt the devils ashore and the deep sea. For that reason they hold together with a slight contempt for the rest of the world. In such an old close calling there are bound to be long-lived feuds and enmities. Yet, if the sea flows up in a gale, a fisherman will not let the boat of his worst enemy be washed away. Partly he hates to see a boat smashed, but partly also he knows that he might almost as well see the man drown, as see him lose the craft by means of which he will take advantage of his luck, when it comes.

## 2. ROUGHING IT

Books about the so-called Simple Life fill a larger and larger space in each year's bookshelf. They rouse an enthusiasm of their own. They do more than express dissatisfaction with whatever is. On the one hand, they minister to an ache for peacefulness, for 'the intense tranquillity of silent hills, and more than silent sky'; and, on the other hand, they feed a longing that lurks always in men's minds for a fuller, freer use of their bodies and of their five senses. Roughing it is regarded by the majority as a spectacle, to be enjoyed from afar off in comfort, but by some as a picnic, and by others as a life to be led—if possible. It has become an ideal. It has been idealized. Elaborate clothes and apparatus for roughing it can be bought in and about the Haymarket. The resources of science and of architectural scholarship are brought to bear on cottages in which to live the simple old life. (Cottagers' cottages are not found sanitary enough.) Simplicity urges people, as it turns out, into a yet greater complexity. Roughing it, in literature and in life, is not the same. It is found, in actual practice, to want improving.

Men tell me in London: 'Ah, lucky you! I

only wish *I* could throw up all this and come and do fishing among your strong, simple fisherfolk.' The luck that is mine, I don't dispute. But about their cultured, comfortable wish I am left wondering. Says a shrewd old friend of mine, a man nearing seventy : 'Lord, wouldn't I like for to have one o' they sort 'long wi' me, doing what I does for a week ! I'll warrant they'd want a softer feather bed an' a better meal than I got. But they takes good care not to come. . . .' For it is not real roughing it that they have in mind ; not the roughing it of people who have to, because they can do no other. The Simple Life they envy does not exist out of books. The meal is there, but not the washing up ; the open window, but not the sink. Strong simple folk, for all their strength, are racked by aches and pains. They can't afford to be properly healthy. In their ways of thought they have baffling twists and turns. To make any headway amongst them one needs to exercise an amount of patience and diplomacy that would fire one ahead in London. And roughing it, as *they* rough it, is never a picnic. To rough it in body means roughing it in mind. Niceties of the English language one may have at one's command, but out at sea a curse or two serves better.

When one's life depends on being heard, one curses hard. 'You ought to do better,' one is told, 'than men born and bred rough.' May be. But rough it and try. It is not so easy to do better than the men bred to the job. Roughing it is, and must be, rough.

One night, after dark, we met on the beach a fisherman who was waiting his two boats home. The weather was breaking, the herrings were far to leeward. 'I wish they was home,' he said, 'and I wouldn't be waiting here, with a comfor'able fire in house. 'Tisn't no fit time for to go so far away. Dark as a hammer, 'tis, out there. What could 'ee do if you got a load of fish? You'd be swamped an' lose the lot—nets and all. 'Tisn't worth it, not on a night like this, risking your life and the boat an' nets, out there in misery, bumping home for a dozen or fifteen hours p'raps. . . .'

'Ah!' said one of us to him, 'rowing's hard, we knows, an' strains a fellow in pieces, but 'tis better to row than reef wi' a load of herrings aboard. 'Tisn't the same anxiety like. You don't go out drifting no more, not yourself, do 'ee?'

'I've finished,' replied the other earnestly. 'And I hopes, I hopes to God, I'll never have to go again. I've a-done my bit ; I've a-digged out

in me time, an' I tell 'ee I'm proper sick o'it—have been for years.'

But out in a third boat, that night, there was an old man, a tall, white-bearded bag of skin and bones, a soiled patriarch, who wanders about most of the day and night, and drops off to sleep in odd places. There was no decking in his boat, not even a cutty up for'ard to put his head under ; no shelter at all from the wind and cold and spray. Her leaks had been stopped, but she is old, and a load of herrings on a lumpy sea might have opened her out like a basket. No food the old man had with him, no bottle of beer or tea, no oilskins, and scant clothes on his back. How his aged arms hauled in the nets I do not know. Young arms find them heavy. Whether he slept out there, or whether he sat up shivering while his venerable bones clacked together with the cold, that I don't know ; but I can guess the language he mumbled through his beard. He has used it on me before now.

He was glad to rough it, even at his age, because he was almost starving, and he wanted the chance of picking up a shilling or two. But *his* sort of roughing it, ashore and afloat, cannot be written down fully and truthfully in books. No



one would print it. It's too rough. 'Twould be too much like life.

To take a milder instance of roughing it : let me describe, from the point of view of comfort, the last night I was herring drifting. When the fish are there, the thing to do is to get them quick, for soon they will go to the bottom to spawn, or the weather will break, and there are months enough of standing by. Ten days or more the three of us had been at it—rowing to the ground, shooting nets, drifting, hauling in, rowing home, hauling up, picking the fish out of the nets, counting, carrying, packing, rushing, tearing, and straining, with no time for a proper meal, not always time to wash, and every night either sleepless, short, or broken. One of our waistbelts had gone in five notches, another's two ; and waistbelts tell no lies. On the Saturday morning we finished packing between twelve and one, snatched up a meal, and before two o'clock were aboard again. There was no wind. We had to row ten miles to the ground with heavy, warped sweeps that twisted one's wrists at every stroke ; and as we passed inside the race off Beer Head, where the dead-calm water boiled like a millstream, we remarked how useless it would be to try to row home against the flood tide.

For three hours we rocked at the sweeps, crawling to the ground. One man was aching all over with rheumatic stiffness and indigestion. The other, who is exceptionally strong and healthy, had no pains, but his face was wooden with tiredness. To keep my own self awake I had a cold and a cough and a sore throat and a splinter under the thumbnail. Just before dark we shot our nets, put on oilskins against the cold, ate thick sandwiches, drank oily tea hotted up over a paraffin flare, looked at the nets, and settled down for an hour's sleep. But we didn't catch off. It was too cold. '*Tis a rough ol' shop,*' we complained, 'and a long ways from home to be in an open boat ; but a fine night, sure 'nuff, for to take in a taddick o' fish.'

The night wore on. We hauled in our nets, picked out a thousand or so of herrings, and shot again. We finished our food and our tea, squatted down, and with coats over our heads we tried very hard to sleep. All our old clothes were damp ; the bow sheets, on which we lay, were soaking with water and fish-slime, and underneath them some dirty bilge-water, which we had had no time to clean out, stank like drains. I jammed myself under the cutty, in the warm ; but oilskins over

damp clothes, making one itch like forty thousand fleas, turned me out again into the cold. We all sat up, shivering and dithering, while the moon, muffled in clouds, spread a dull cold light over the water. One thought of feather beds, of clean warm nightclothes, and, curiously enough, not of hot grog, but of cooling drinks.

The early hours were a long-drawn nightmare of discomfort. About three o'clock we started hauling in for another thousand of fish, and by four o'clock we were ready to take the ebb tide homewards. There was nothing to eat aboard, nothing to drink, and very little tobacco. We had drifted to a dozen miles from home, and had scarcely wind enough to fill the sail. We took perforce to the sweeps. The boat had no life in her. There was not much life in us. With eyes that closed of themselves, and parched, lumpy throats, we rowed—rowed like machines, using pain for fuel. The sun dawned late.

Until nearly eight in the morning we rocked at the sweeps. Finally, as if to mock us, after rowing all that way, a breeze sprang up from the south-east, and we sailed the short mile home. Had we waited, the wind would have done all our work. But we weren't to know that.

It was not finished. Most of the morning, in a drizzling rain, we picked out, counted, and packed our fish. Then, during the last hour of the last twenty-four of that week's work, we three good friends fell out, and had a miserable argument that was the roughest trip in all that roughing it. We couldn't help ourselves. Our nerves were raw with tiredness, hurry, and want of sleep.

The weather had broken. The fishing was ended for the time. We drank beer to make us less jumpy, and went to bed.

Why on earth does one do it, one asks, unless starvation compels? Why does anybody do it who can earn a crust otherwise? While I was tired the question refused to be answered. But there is an answer, I think. It came to us over the dark water, on a previous night, when there was a thicket of us on the fishing-ground and the sea was dotted with riding-lights. 'Who's got for thy third hand?' asked a distant voice in the sing-song drawl that carries for a mile over calm water. 'Hast got thic chap?'

'Aye!' we replied.

'I reckon,' sing-songed the voice, 'that a chap as 'ould come out here wi'out having to, 'ould go to hell for pleasure!'

Understand by *pleasure* that craving for *more life at any cost*, which lies behind all our instincts, all our pleasures and all our vices—and there the answer is. Literary roughing it is a hankering for rest and ease, a desire to be less painfully alive.

Many a time

I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
sighed a literary poet. But real roughing it is a flinging of life to the winds in the hope of gathering more life. It is going to hell for pleasure. It is going to hell for life.

The trouble is that men should have to go to hell, not for more life, but just barely to live.



## 18. NAVY DISCONTENTS

SOME men will drive a motor car for years without ever troubling to learn so much as the construction of their engine ; others can sail a boat excellently, yet have never even learnt how to splice a rope ; and all goes well, as a rule, till something goes wrong. Then they are done. Although such a limitation of interest is hard to understand, it is very much on a par with the attitude of the British nation towards the British Navy. Lord Fisher was wonderfully clever at taking advantage of it in order to gain his own way. 'Here's the money,' the nation says in effect. 'Rule Britannia! Is all well?' And through its official and journalistic spokesmen the Navy replies, 'Ay, ay, sirs! You may sleep in your beds.' But if, instead of cheap naval heroics, the nation could hear the actual talk of its blue-jackets among themselves and their friends ; if, behind the elaborate stage-management of the

Navy, the nation could see something of the real life of the actors, it would be most unpleasantly surprised, not to say flustered. 'Look at the money we are spending,' the nation would complain. 'Tis precious little of it *we* ever get,' the bluejacket would reply. 'It all makes more work for us, but what's our pay? One and eightpence a day, the same as it always was, and provide your own uniform.'—'But we didn't know you had to buy your own uniform.'—'There's a hell of a lot about the Navy that *you* don't know!' would probably be the bluejacket's retort. And for any one who believes that the Navy, besides being a weapon, is the finest material expression of the English spirit, nothing is more disheartening, more disillusionizing, than the ordinary unfettered talk of the lower deck. Argue as one will on the Navy's behalf—I have argued myself for hours together with bluejackets and their friends in an endeavour to make the best of things—there can be no doubt whatever of the discontent. Mr. Lionel Yexley might be dubbed a specialist in naval discontent, but he has not exaggerated in his article on *Courts-Martial and Other Things: A Plea for Enquiry*<sup>1</sup>:—

<sup>1</sup> *The Fleet Annual and Naval Year-Book*, 1911. Compiled by Lionel Yexley.

Mr. Yexley, editor of the lower-deck newspaper, *The Fleet*, and author of

‘The British Navy is steering straight ahead to another crisis in its history : when the crisis will come no man can say. All crises are precipitated by a combination of untoward events, but the material for a crisis must be there, otherwise the untoward events dissipate harmlessly. The material for a naval crisis is there piled up, with the pile growing larger and larger. . . . Now it comes our turn to speak out, as a prolonged silence would be a sin of omission. The Navy is reeking with discontent, which grows day by day, and which if not fairly met must end in explosion.’

Notwithstanding more small outbreaks of insubordination than are ever reported in the newspapers, there is no cause to say that mutiny is in the wind. But there exists in the Navy, not only among the so-called bad characters, not only among the lower ratings, an amount of fermentation, of ill-will, of unwilling work, of pull-dog pull-devil—of suppressed or potential mutinous feeling, in short—which for every reason, that of

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*The Inner Life of the Navy* (an outspoken book much better reviewed than taken to heart), has done service both as seaman and coastguard. He threw up his career and pension in order to speak his mind, and he has succeeded remarkably well in doing so.

efficiency not the least, ought to be remedied. Whether justified or not, there it is ; and the fact of its existence is the fact that has to be reckoned with. It may be explained, but it can't be explained away.

It is not good that staid men, petty officers with the pay and privileges of their rating, should be counting the days till their discharge, like children during their first term at school. It is not good that many high-spirited young men should have their ambitions broken, should so soon adopt a hell-about-it tone, should join the scramble for soft jobs, and although well able, should refuse to qualify for promotion, either because they are already sick of their work, or else because promotion would mean remaining longer in the Service. It is bad that there should be so much difference between 'happy ships' and ships that are 'proper sad,' between officers who are never named without curses and officers who are 'jonnick.' It is worse, if anything, that the conversation of bluejackets ashore should only too often consist of one long bitter grumble. The number of men who desert or buy themselves out, or who even go so far as to obtain their discharge in the form of a couple of years' hard

labour and subsequent dismissal for an offence committed on purpose, is proof sufficient that the grumbling is not simply idle talk. If those are ways they have in our Navy, then it is humiliating to us all.

Here let me say that we are far from wishing either to play the alarmist, or to attack the Admiralty, which itself is in the nation's service, and is what the nation makes it. For those of us who have many friends on the lower deck, it is more a matter of indignation than of alarm that a country which pays so dearly for its ships of steel should hold so cheap its men of flesh and blood. The duty of the nation towards its blue-jackets ought not to stop at boasting about them, paying them as little as possible, standing them drinks, and subscribing towards Miss Weston's temperance work.

Certainly it is difficult for the country at large to know much of life on the lower deck. The Navy is, so to speak, a nation within a nation, whose inner workings are as difficult for an outsider to follow as the inner workings of, say, a foreign parliament. One would need to be in it and of it in order to know its life thoroughly, and then, probably, one would be too much in the thick



of it to look around the situation as well as at it. 'The silent Navy' it is called, implying that it works instead of chatters. 'Gagged' would be just as correct. It is against Regulations to discuss Service matters outside the Service ; as much as a man's career is worth if he is found out. Moreover, although in these days hardly anything can be done without combination and organization, Article 10 of the Admiralty Instructions still holds, except, apparently, in the case of admirals :—

'All combinations of persons belonging to the Fleet formed for the purpose of bringing about alterations in the existing Regulations or Customs of His Majesty's Naval Service, whether affecting their interests individually or collectively, are prohibited, as being contrary to the traditions and practice of the Service and injurious to its welfare and discipline.'

More than once I have heard fathers say to their sons (not without a certain amount of satisfaction), 'You won't be able to speak to them in the Navy like you've spoke to me before now. You mustn't even speak up for yourself when you're put upon and in the right. Just you mind that. You'll be a marked man if you do. The way to get on in

the Navy is to lie low, whatever happens, and jog along quiet, and take what comes, glad that it isn't no worse.' Practically all the information which appears in newspapers has either been filtered through the quarter-deck, or else has been written up by 'the likes o' they.' On many points of supreme importance to the lower deck the Press is most discreetly silent or short-winded. And in any case, the petty grievances which all accumulate in men's lives to produce a deep sense of injury, are apt by themselves, on paper, to seem very flat and petty. 'What a small thing,' one says, 'to make such a fuss about !' forgetting that it is one of many small things—the last straw, perhaps, which is breaking the camel's back.

Quite apart from the fact that lower-deck grievances are tending to become explosive, there is this much of great interest to note : the more the grievances are analyzed, the plainer it appears that the causes of them lie in a large measure outside the Navy, though operating within. In some respects the trouble arises out of the clash between conditions in the Service and in the outside world ; in other respects it is a reflection, in an exaggerated form, of similar troubles outside. Not all the grievances are the Navy's fault, nor can they all

be remedied unless or until they are remedied by and in the country at large. That is a point, it seems to me, which is overlooked both by the lower deck and by such spokesmen as it possesses.

First of all, mere grumbling for the sake of grumbling may be put aside. We know that the Navy, like *Punch*, never is what it used to be. Seamen have the reputation of great grumblers, and small wonder they grumble, seeing that they endure more risks and hardships than landmen for less pay! 'Sith navigation is the meane whereby countryes are discovered, and communitie drawne between nation and nation. . . and that by Navigation commonweales through mutuall trade are not only susteined, but mightely enriched, with how great esteeme ought the painefull Seaman to be embraced by whose hard adventures such excellent benefites are atcheived, for by his exceeding great hazzards. . . countries and people are apparently made known unto us.'<sup>1</sup> But the contrary is the case in practice, when it comes to dealing with seamen and taking advantage of their political and economic helplessness.

It is natural, too, that men who joined the Navy as youths, before they had much experience

<sup>1</sup> *The Seaman's Secrets*, by John Davies, the Elizabethan navigator.

of life, should blame the Service for a good deal which is common to life everywhere.

Due allowance being made for those two sources of grumbling, we come to the genuine grievances, which fall, broadly speaking, under the two heads of pay and discipline: the question of pay being governed very largely by outside conditions, and that of discipline being more directly an affair of Service regulations and tradition.

Stinginess in dealing with the men is, indeed, almost inevitable from the economic position of the Navy. It needs vast sums of money, and in order to get them from Parliament it is bound to bulk largely in the public eye, to keep the country in a state of naval enthusiasm—to advertise itself, in short. And it does advertise itself exceedingly well. But for advertising purposes, huge new ships, even if undermanned, which can be photographed, measured, pitted on paper against those of other navies, and gushed over in the Press—splendid creatures of steel with nerves of electricity, which can be seen with the eye at great, expensive, spectacular naval reviews—they give much better value for the money obtainable than a more or less invisible increase in the welfare of the men. Thus the nation is induced to play the naval game

with a generous gusto, and a vicious circle is established—more money wanted, more ships to get it ; more money obtained, more ships built with it. What might be called strategic expenses are also mounting up. Contractors don't die poor. Hence the men are the very last to feel the benefit of what money can be screwed out of the Exchequer, and the Navy becomes like a man who just succeeds in maintaining a large household by skimping his servants ; only the Navy has the additional advantage that its servants can't leave when they like, are liable to imprisonment if they kick against it, and dare not openly appeal to public opinion.

In consequence, although the soldier has had his pay raised and receives for his kit an allowance out of which, with care, he can save money, the seaman's pay remains the same as ever, namely, one and eightpence a day, eleven and eightpence a week. Out of that he has to clothe himself, according to regulations which can be made very vexatious, and he has to meet all his other expenses, not the least of them being the need of titbits from the canteen in order to vary the monotony and coarseness of sea cooking. That is to say, while the standard of living in the outside world has become constantly more expensive, and the



purchasing power of money has decreased, the bluejacket's pay has remained stationary. How can the shoe do otherwise than pinch? It is true that good-conduct badges and the like will add a few pence extra a day; it is true that he may look forward to a pension—as who should not who contracts to sell his life? Nevertheless, it becomes more and more difficult to save, although the men show a greater disposition to do so; and pensions are harder to get. What, again, can a man send home to his wife, even if he is a petty officer earning just over a pound a week? Forty shillings a month, perhaps, to keep a home going! Seamen, one hears it said, ought not to marry. They sometimes say it themselves. But that is to render infertile thousands of picked men, and the results of enforced singleness on young seamen in the pink of bodily condition, on leave in seaport towns, are not hard to imagine. The returns for venereal diseases form one of the little, or rather big, matters which the newspapers fail to publish at length, if at all. The advertisements in Service and port journals tell their own tale. And after marriage. . . . All honour to seamen's wives for managing so well as most of them do, by letting lodgings and going out to work! Which is not,

however, to say that distressing matrimonial affairs don't occur with only too great a frequency. Here a grass-widow, as the phrase goes, puts out the broom ; there a man, returning home from a foreign station, is met by friends to tell him his wife has gone away. I don't propose to retail the scandals that come under one's own notice, nor do I think one should cast stones at the guilty parties.

It is said, of course, that to a bluejacket's pay the value of his board and lodging should be added. Admitting that the value of his food is an item to be added, it is only fair to deduct again from that total the money of his own that he is practically obliged to spend on extra food. And as to the lodging, what is the value of a lodging in which he is always under discipline, and of a bed from which he may be called out or kept out at any hour of the day or night? Night work is on the increase.

As Mr. Yexley points out, the pay of the lower ratings would not so much matter if promotion were fairly rapid and sure. But the personnel has remained within four thousand of the same figure (127,100—131,000) since 1904. Promotion lags, and men are kept waiting for it long after they have qualified. An A.B. for instance,

of seven years' service, a good seaman, belonging to a family of good seamen, whom I coached myself, last year, in arithmetic for his leading seaman's examination, and who passed pretty easily, is still waiting for his leading seaman's rate and pay, although meantime he has been set to do leading seaman's work. 'To-day,' says Mr. Yexley, 'men remain eight, ten, or even twelve years in the lower ranks, whereas a few years ago it was only two, three, or five. And the pay remains the same in spite of the fact that the conditions of service demand much higher qualifications than of old. The present A.B. is a skilled mechanic, who has to pass both educational and professional tests before he can attain to the rating, tests that were undreamed of by his predecessors of only a few years ago, while he is doomed to remain on the lower rung of the ladder, through no fault of his own, for perhaps a decade.'<sup>1</sup>

Excessively slow promotion, like the short-service system (without which, promotion for those who do mean to stay in the Navy would probably be slower still) puts into the men a devil-may-care spirit. 'The starry blankers don't care whether

<sup>1</sup> A recent Admiralty order, creating a class of 'exceptional' men for first promotion, admits as much; although, apart from those exceptional men, it does nothing to remedy the present state of affairs.

'tis Christmas or Easter !' complain the petty officers, who are buffers in fact as well as, some of them, buffers in nickname, between the commander who wants the work done, and seamen who either won't or can't do it. The petty officers are held responsible ; once they dip, *i.e.*, are dis-rated, which happens pretty easily in some ships, they can seldom regain their old rate ; and thus the discontent is spread from the lower ratings to the higher. Frequently I have tried to persuade petty officers to aim at warrant rank. 'Not me !' they all reply. 'Why, that'd mean staying in the Service till I'm an old man. I'm going to—— off out of it as soon as ever I'm entitled to my discharge.'<sup>1</sup>

Lower-deck promotion to commissioned rank is a thing one would very much like to see. In this year's *Fleet Annual* there is an able appeal for

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, 'to my discharge with a pension.' The fact that a considerable percentage both of seamen and of stokers re-engage for a further period after their twelve years, is not so contradictory as it may seem at first sight. The reasons they give themselves are usually ; that having served the so many years, they may as well do a few years longer for a pension, for otherwise, if they come out without any pension, the years that they have already done would be as good as lost ; or, that they couldn't find a shore job to drop into, and so were driven back to the Navy ; or else, frankly, that routine life in the service had unfitted them for the more irregular shore jobs, such as fishing. On the other hand, the men who serve the longer time and come out with a pension, obtain employment all the more easily, because employers, especially in the country, take advantage of their pension to pay them a lower rate of wages than men without pensions could live on.

it, together with a carefully worked-out scheme. But I cannot say that I have ever myself come across any great enthusiasm for it amongst blue-jackets. They seem to feel that the gap between quarter-deck and lower deck, and their respective points of view, is too wide; that it corresponds too closely with a similar gap in civil life; and that the relations of the two decks being as they are at present, it would be the duty of a promoted seaman to round on his own sort. The lower deck has an *esprit de corps* of its own, and the general verdict appears to be that lower-deck promotion to commissioned rank is a thing which ought to be feasible, but is not. At the same time, however, it may be noted that the scheme given in the *Fleet Annual* appears to meet many, if not most, of the objections.

In more than one way, the transformation of fighting ships into huge boxes of intricate machinery, combined with the state of the labour market, has acted to the disadvantage of the seaman branch. The greater the proportion of artificers in a ship's company, the smaller must be the number of seaman left to do the general cleaning and so forth—the housemaid work of the ship. Hence the necessary work comes heavier on



those who remain to do it. And although the artificers keep in order their own pieces of mechanism, the seamen, already diminished in number, have the extra work of cleaning up their messes after them. Nor is that the only or the most galling disadvantage. I have before me an advertisement which has been appearing in Devon newspapers :—

‘ROYAL NAVY.—Wanted for immediate entry, ENGINE-ROOM ARTIFICERS (Fitters and Turners), age 21 to 28 ; commencing pay, 38s. 6d. per week.—Apply at once, to Admiralty Recruiting Office, 9 Goldsmith Street, Exeter.’

That is to say, the Admiralty is offering those young artificers, from the day they join, half as much again as the pay of a chief petty officer, and about as much as the maximum pay of a chief stoker. In a chief petty officers’ mess one is rather surprised, as a rule, to see several youngsters with red braid on their uniforms. They are electricians and the like. Why should they be paid more than any seaman, and take precedence of men who were in the Navy when they were babies ? Of course, the seamen ask that question, without always hitting upon the right answer. The Navy requires specially

trained men to run and repair its more delicate pieces of mechanism, and such men can earn good wages outside. Therefore, it seems the Admiralty is compelled to offer them high pay and privileges in order to attract them into the Service. Whereas a seaman can earn little enough outside, and a stoker not very much more. There is not the same external compulsion to pay their branches well. The seamen point out with some force that so long as a battleship goes to sea at all, it is the executive branch, that is to say themselves, which navigates it and prevents the whole box of tricks, artificers included, from going to the bottom. They resent not so much the pay and privileges of the artificers as the action of the Admiralty in taking advantage of the labour market to continue paying its seamen badly. And, in fact, rightly or wrongly, that is their common opinion of the Admiralty in its relations with its men : that it is not straight, let alone generous, in its dealings ; that it takes away with one hand what it pretends to give with the other ; that it uses to the full its power to drive hard bargains with bound men. Such accusations, whether just or not, imply a certain failure on the Admiralty's part in the treatment of its men.

Naval discipline contrasts with, rather than depends on, outside conditions. Outside, we have become more and more democratic, in appearances at all events. But naval discipline was set up and stereotyped in the days when seamen were sea-labourers, shipped like merchant crews for single commissions ; the ruff-raff of our ports, many of them, who had, literally, to be knocked into shape. Nowadays, the seaman is a trained specialist, a man of the same order of intelligence, if not of the same education, as his officers. Yet he is still subject to the same old discipline.

Mr. Yexley gives a table of the summary punishments for the year 1909 :—

	Seamen Class.	Non-Seamen Class.	Marines Afloat.	Marines Ashore.
No. of punishments	56,940	43,278	12,520	1,113
No. of men	42,125	48,727	11,762	6,596

Further, he quotes from the letter of a naval officer to *The Fleet* :—

‘ . . . but what about the unrecorded punishments ? Could you only get behind the scenes in every ship of the Fleet, and cast your eyes over the books recording the fancy and illegal punishments awarded in practically every ship and establishment of the Service, punish-

ments which are purposely kept out of the official returns, so that any particular ship, or, I might say, commanding officer, should avoid being relieved of his command, the total would be swollen to [by?] 100 per cent.'

Mr. Yexley's own remarks, strong though they are, can scarcely outdo these two extracts :—

'The seamen afloat are helots—"names, just names"—who can only be kept in order—"disciplined"—by a system of punish and drive . . . The naval officer from very early days is fed on ancient traditions till he looks on the naval seaman of to-day from exactly the same point of view as his predecessor of a hundred and fifty years ago did on the seaman of his day.

'But while all naval laws, regulations, and customs belong to the past, the *personnel* lives very much in the present. When the seaman's main duty was to pull on ropes or black down-rigging, it may have been possible to drive him from pillar to post and punish him if he did not get from one to the other quick enough, but you cannot drive men to shoot straight with modern ordnance ; you cannot drive men to manipulate wireless apparatus, torpedoes, sub-

marines, etc., etc. These all require not brawn, but applied and cultivated intelligence. That is what the State demands from the modern naval seaman, and gets ; it employs him during the day at work which calls for the full use of his cultivated intelligence, then it will take him and stand him in a dark corner for two hours each night because he did not have his cap on straight or dared to wear a waist-belt to keep his trousers up (10A). No one seems to realise that this is an outrage—it was done a hundred years ago, why not to-day ? As well argue : “ I stood my son in the corner in his nursery days, why should not I do it now he is a man ? ” ’

As against the alleged necessity of such a system. Mr. Yexley gives a photograph of *H.M.S. Foam*, a destroyer which ended a two years’ commission on the Mediterranean Station without a solitary case of leave-breaking or a single petty offence against discipline ; and which, among her sixty-three hands, had 153 good-conduct badges.

There between, the truth seems to lie. It is not to be supposed that all naval officers are bad, The obsolete system, the tradition, is at fault ; half the trouble is caused by the jonties, that is to



say the ship's police, who in origin belong to the men. A just disciplinarian is always respected. Some officers, who know how to interpret the old regulations according to modern needs, are nothing less than beloved by their men. 'He's a rare chap,' one hears of such an one. 'A proper gentleman, with no damn'd swank!' 'A b——y toff!' 'A heller to bark, but, bless you, his bite's as harmless as a sucking baby's!' The point is, that those officers who like so to use their position, and to fall back on the letter of the Regulations, can worry the men out of their lives, and then break them altogether for resenting the treatment. Officers of that sort may not be very numerous; certainly not so numerous as they used to be; but it doesn't take many flies instead of currants to make a cake uneatable. The Portsmouth affair of 'Down on the knee, you dogs!' (which, correctly or not, was the common version of the order) caused a blaze of excitement throughout the Navy, not on account of that order alone, but because men felt that in general they *were* looked upon as dogs. Particular resentment is expressed against young midshipmen who bullyrag boat's crews of twice their experience, and then put them in the report for objecting

to carry out orders which are bad seamanship. Whilst a battleship in which there had been considerable trouble over leave-stopping, was lying at anchor off the town in which I write, one of her boats was sent ashore on a day when it was unfit for any boat to be beached, let alone a Navy boat. In shoving off again, a blue-jacket fell, damaging the boat and some of her gear. It was an accident which might have happened to the best of surf-men. Notwithstanding which, the unfortunate man was heavily punished. The spiritless, careless bearing of the men aboard that ship, and her general lack of smartness, was plain to see when one rowed out around her. Shortly afterwards, we saw the mother of a bluejacket whose leave had been stopped, through his own fault, approach the skipper of another battleship when he came ashore, asking that her son might have special leave to see his invalid father. Many officers would have held to discipline, but that particular skipper granted the leave, and his wife—who was much admired because she could hop into and out of a beached boat better than any of the ship's officers—spoke pleasantly to the woman. If they could have heard the buzz of talk over their kind-

ness they would have felt, I think, more than thanked.

Those are illustrations to hand of a difference which ought not to exist. In the interests of naval efficiency, excuses for accident are not accepted either from officers or men ; but the men take notice that after an officer has been dismissed his ship, he waits a while, and gets another ; whereas a man sent to prison is finished with. Courts-martial fall between the two stools of homely common sense and proper judicial procedure ; hence the lower-deck saying, that they exist not to try, but to punish. Courts of law are by no means perfect ; working people don't deceive themselves on that point ; they know very well that the man who can hire the best lawyer has the best chance. But the Navy is a place where social injustices and inequalities, held in leash outside by public opinion, can be carried fully into effect. 'Aye !' one hears, 'and that's what their sort would like to do to us that isn't in the Service. An't 'ee ever know'd 'em try ? Only *we* should tell 'em off pretty quick. But in the Navy, you see, they've got 'em under their thumb, in the same ship, day and night, and can do wi' 'em what they're minded.'

Nevertheless, things are changing, there too. Officers work with their men ; their own promotion—of a gunnery lieutenant, for instance—partly depends on them. When more officers *feel* with the men, and the men realize better their officers' troubles and difficulties ; when officers and men shall have become fellow-men, willing co-partners, each doing the work that fits him best, in a great service, then the Navy will have made a big stride forward.

At present, the Admiralty seems to be out of touch with its men, and still more with those seafaring communities which supply the best of them. A tale is often told among Service people of how a high officer went aboard a ship and demanded volunteers for a landing party which expected tough and dangerous work. An order was given for good-conduct men to fall in on deck. 'Who are these?' said the officer. 'Where are your bad characters? Fall *them* in. I want men who can fight!' Strictly true or not, the popularity of the yarn and the approval which always greets it, show that the attempt to force Sunday-school standards upon the Navy, in place of the old standards of action, has not succeeded. A little drunkenness, a little leave-breaking—what about it, they say, if the man can fight? Reckless

men for desperate work : always was and always will be !

That is still the popular sentiment, and it tells equally against those men who creep up the Service by means of their ability to pass examinations. Those of us who have passed many examinations know what a gamble they are, and know also the type of man who does best. So do bluejackets. The mere examinees who jump over their heads give rise to much dissatisfaction.

It is useless to say that every man is a free agent either to enter the Navy or not to do so, and having entered into the contract, must make the best of it. Working people are not such shallow psychologists. They face the fact that the Navy calls to all that is best and most high-spirited in a youth, before he has had much experience of life, and that once there, he is bound to it for a term of years. In the old days of hand-to-hand fighting, men would fight for fighting's sake when their blood was up. But modern warfare, carried on in death-traps, with scientific instruments of destruction, is rather a matter of nerve than of animal pluck. Therefore, goodwill is more than ever needful. Besides which, it hurts one's pride in the Navy that the lower deck should reek with discontent.



## 19. DIVORCE FOR THE POOR

WHEN Lord Redesdale, in expressing the opinions and prejudices of a large number of people, dissented from the recommendations of the Divorce Commission of 1850, on the ground that divorce closes the door to reconciliation and tends to break up the home, he clinched his arguments with one indisputable fact: there was no popular demand for divorce. The same holds good to-day, even more among the poor, perhaps, than among the better-to-do. The fact that, as Lord Gorell put it: 'In Divorce Court procedure there is one law for the rich and another for the poor,' is certainly resented by the latter; but with a vague and acquiescent indignation. They know very well that in almost everything there is one law for the rich and another for themselves; and they are beginning to realize that much of the so-called democratic legislation of recent years (above all,

that of the grandmotherly sort) has increased the injustice, has more heavily penalized poverty, has intruded further and further into their homes, has interfered less and less tolerantly with their own habits and customs. Is it not said, for example, with more than a spice of truth, that you cannot in practice recover debts from a man who has the money to pay them, but if he has too little money to live on, then you can screw what he has out of him? Are not working men and their children fined or sent to prison daily for offences which, were they better-off, would never bring them into court at all? With that singular fatalistic patience of theirs, they are more prepared to make the best of a bad job than to fight for betterment. And if they did make up their minds to act instead of grumble, there are many things more generally oppressive than the divorce laws, if not more unjust. Opinions like those of Lord Redesdale, amiable sentiments about the sanctity of the home, even where home is a hell, are not the cause of popular apathy. It is to be traced rather to causes which, whether less creditable or no, are nearer in their bearing on everyday life as it is, and has to be, lived.

Divorce, moreover, regarded as the legalization

of irregular relations, is less urgent among a people who, whatever their talk and conduct may indicate, are at heart much more tolerant than the middle classes of moral irregularity. It has to be remembered in taking the opinion of the poor on divorce in general, and would have to be remembered in hearing their evidence during divorce cases, that their talk in gossip is very much worse than their bite in action. If an unmarried man and woman lived together in a middle-class suburb, the neighbours' talk and their conduct would more or less correspond. The couple would be cut severely. But in a working-class neighbourhood, though gossip would be blood-curdling, the couple would be tolerated and even treated with kindness, especially if they were ill or in trouble. In discussing divorce with a good many working men and women—discussing it more frankly than one can do with any other class of people except men of science—I have found always that they first of all scouted it altogether, and that then, on bending their minds to the subject, they expressed opinions in substantial agreement with those I am here trying to set down. The difference between their hasty and their considered opinion is very significant.

Though people may deal with the subject truthfully in private, and face facts, they are apt, in public, to burke facts and to say what they think they ought to say, or what they imagine to be expected of them.

For the majority of working people divorce no more exists as a way out of matrimonial difficulties than champagne as a morning pick-me-up or private motor-cars for Sunday outings. It is not borne in mind as a possibility, let alone not within their means. By many of them, indeed, it is looked upon as a vice for the wealthy, more scandalous than adultery, very much worse than simple immorality on the part of the unmarried. To be divorced is to be found out, whereas otherwise, with good luck and good management, all the moralities can be flouted with impunity; and it is one of the strongest arguments against State interference in private morality, that detection and punishment, like many children or none, is so much a matter of chance; that the more innocent stand to be found out first and made to suffer most. In a case of unhappy marriage where a district visitor, say, would freely recommend divorce, or at least separation, the neighbours would probably be of the opinion: 'They're

married and they must make the best of it. 'Tisn't nobody's fault but their own. I reckon one's just so much to blame as t'other, if all the facts was know'd.' The legal assumption that one party to a divorce suit is innocent and injured, and the other altogether in the wrong, would find little support among the poor. They know each other's lives too well ; they distinguish less sharply between the word and the deed, behaviour and action ; the continual cold shoulder or sarcasm, for instance, and the short-lasting actionable blow.

'He's been and left her for good without a penny,' complains one.

'Who wouldn't get away from a tongue like hers?' retorts another.

'Not but what her wasn't a good wife to him other ways.'

'Her don't never see nothing of 'en till he comes home bottled-up after the pub closes.'

'If her's afraid to dirty her stove after her's cleaned up, cooking him a bit of hot supper, I don't blame him. Must go somewhere after work's done. Always got her mother squat in his house, gossiping and eyeing everything, an't her?'



‘I’d limb *my* man if he was to go after girls like hers.’

‘Her know’d what he was like afore her married ’en, didn’ her? ’Tis the way of some chaps; they likes a change sometimes; and mostly they bain’t no worse, after that. ’Sides, her’s gone off terrible in looks. ’Tisn’t her fault, to be sure, but there ’tis.’

‘He hits her shameful.’

‘If he’d taken and given her a damn good hiding when her started boozing, and not allowed her no money, that’d have been the thing. He was too easy with her first going off, and now her’s roused him he ain’t easy enough.’

‘’Tis like this in married life, I tell ’ee: one says something, heedless like, and t’other says something in return; and it all mounts up. Then one lets fly, and t’other lets fly; and all the time they’d give anything to stop it, only they can’t. ’Twould puzzle God Almighty Himself to find out which is worst. Mostly you jogs along happy enough in married life, so long as you got something to eat and a bed to lie on; but if ’twasn’t for the children, and keeping a home together, and a fellow wanting a woman and a woman wanting a chap, and a husband and

wife being most handy to each other. . . . Aye, 'tis a chancy turn-out, and you can't rightly judge nobody, what their feelings is.'

That is the sort of talk which goes on around unhappy households in a working-class neighbourhood. In detail it is often unkind, sometimes ill-natured. But in the mass, in total effect, it is extremely tolerant. And it does not blink essential physical facts. The intimacy combined with the local publicity of working-class life, the inability of such people to get away from each other for a time, in order to think things over calmly, is doubly trying when trouble arises. Yet hardly a word is to be heard about divorce, unless in jest, though the advisability of a separation may in bad cases be conceded. Except on the part of those who are themselves in hopeless matrimonial difficulties, there is still, among the poor, in regard to better divorce facilities, next to nothing of that widespread and pressing demand which is supposed to precede reform under a democracy.

But here it is precisely the exceptions that matter. Divorce law is necessarily law for the exceptional case. Flagrant injustice to a minority benefits neither them nor the majority ; and

though law-makers, being politicians, usually claim to have the people behind them, it has, fortunately, never yet been held that minorities should not have justice among themselves simply because a majority fails to demand it for them ; nor is it reasonable, though it has been too much the case in practice, that the only laws framed for the minority and the helpless should be those which penalize them for just that which puts them in a minority. No doubt the present inaccessibility of the divorce court has had an effect in causing couples not over-well mated to try and make the best of things, and frequently they do in an astonishing measure succeed. No doubt, again, a cheapening of divorce would tend, as we say, to put divorce into the heads of the poor. The result is difficult to forecast. (The result of separation orders was not very accurately foreseen.) Probably a balance would be more or less preserved. The steady loosening of hard and fast moral standards ; in other words, the increasing adaptation of moral codes to the conditions of actual life, would ease divorce in cases where it appeared desirable. And, on the other hand, the lamentable apeing among the poor of middle-class conventional respectabilities would act as a check

on it. Newspaper reports are an undoubted deterrent among those who fear public opinion, and in so far as they are accurate, and not merely spicy, it is difficult to see how they can do more harm than good. Nobody has suggested that divorce should be compulsory on those who do not choose to avail themselves of it. But by accepting divorce as an institution, however imperfect, civilized States have acknowledged that it is against public policy forcibly to hold together ill-matched couples who are ruining each other's lives, when they desire to be separate, and when such separation does not involve undue injury to others. The waste of human happiness and energy and efficiency in a bad marriage is too great. Therefore the questions at issue are : not whether the divorce law should afford the same relief to the poor as to the rich—which may be taken for granted ;—but how the relief can be equalized in actual practice, and made as beneficial as possible, and how the present law needs reforming to that end.

For the injustice of one law for the rich and another for the poor cannot be righted simply by cheapening and facilitating divorce procedure, without reforming divorce law. A matrimonial

suit probes into the *vie intime* of the parties to it; and so long as divorce is confined to the well-to-do, the judge and lawyers engaged in the case are dealing with their own class of people, or, at any rate, with people whose social customs and ways of thought they understand fairly well. But it will be otherwise when the divorce court is opened to the poor. Different classes have different habits and customs, different standards of life, different ideals even. Various offences have varying causes, values, results. Either the grounds of divorce must be modified according to class, which presupposes extraordinary social knowledge and discretionary powers on the part of judges and juries, or else some leading principles must be found upon which justice to all classes alike can be based. To take an instance noted by Mr. Edward Jenks<sup>1</sup> in his chapter on rights arising from marriage: 'It is still said that a husband . . . is entitled to administer moderate physical chastisement on suitable occasions to his wife. But it is more than doubtful whether any Court would now act on these survivals of a past epoch.' Yet among the poor it is still held, not by the menfolk alone, that there are occasions

<sup>1</sup> *Husband and Wife in the Law*, by Edward Jenks, M.A., B.C.L.



when a man may administer moderate physical chastisement with advantage ; and even that a certain amount of licence may be granted him to administer less moderate physical chastisement on unsuitable occasions. Perhaps the brutal old proverb

A woman, a dog, and a walnut tree,  
The more you whack 'em the better they be !

has indeed some foundation in sexual psychology. At all events, I have heard women say, more than once, that their husbands might give them much worse than a blow. 'I'd take it if I know'd I was in the wrong or he didn't really mean it, but if he was in the wrong, or if he meant it—look out !' That is one point of view which would have to be reckoned with. For other reasons, too, the fact that physical chastisement, a bit of rough and tumble, had taken place, would not have the same value in suits between working-class couples and between well-to-do couples. A black eye in middle-class life would be strong presumptive evidence of general cruelty ; it might be so among the poor, but not necessarily. Some working men, quite decent and kindly fellows at ordinary times, will occasionally give their wives a black eye, especially if they are in liquor. What

they are not so apt to inflict is the continuous mental torture which withers a woman's life, without visible bruises. Desertion, again, for a given period, is far more serious for the woman who has neither income nor value in the labour market, than it is for the woman with an independent income, or women who can go out to work or back into service. Wealthy women's husbands frequently travel for a year or two; a woman accustomed to live on weekly wages is effectively deserted in a fortnight. If a rich man's wife refuses to care for his house and children, he can have them looked after; if she makes his life a misery, he can go to his club or elsewhere. The working man can do neither. His marriage is for better or for worse in every respect.

Although the working-man's wife has to put up with certain ills, mainly arising from poverty, her position is fundamentally different from, and stronger than, that of the middle-class wife. Among the well-to-do, marriage considerably increases a man's expenses; but among the working-classes, lodgings are comparatively dear, and, for an equal degree of comfort, marriage with a capable woman tends, if anything, to reduce a man's expenses. Broadly speaking—

very broadly speaking, of course—the wife of the well-to-do man is a luxury ; as such she is often kept in ornamental idleness, or busy with matters of no importance. She is not necessary to his business or profession. By means of paid servants, his household can be carried on without her. But the working-man's wife is a household necessity. Without her, or if she is a bad wife to him, his home as well as his comfort, his life itself, goes to pieces. She herself cooks the food that keeps him fit to work, and washes his clothes on one steaming day of the week. She lays out his wages. Pin-money she is not allowed ; on the contrary, it is often she who allows her husband pocket-money. She holds the family purse and all the power that goes with it, and she, not the man, is the real head of the family. For these and a good many other reasons, the working wife has a greater hold over her husband, and can enforce better a general faithfulness on his part. She also seems, possibly on account of the security of her position, more disposed to condone an occasional act of unfaithfulness.

The one thing to which all else must be subordinated in a working-class marriage is keeping the home together.

Our present divorce law is certainly not adapted to the conditions of working-class life, nor, so far as one can see, would it be capable of dealing equitably with working-class marriage. Whatever its intention was, it seems in practice to be based jointly and rather unsystematically upon the rights of property and the punishment of moral delinquency. Its remedial side—as the way out of an unhappy marriage, the ending of an intolerable situation, the legal confirmation of a divorce already existing in the actual life of the parties—is not prominent. A man or woman is commonly said to be *entitled* to divorce, not because one or both of them will be benefited in the future, but because one of them has been wronged in the past. More attention is given to proving that the respondent is an immoral person than to showing that the marriage is one which, for the good of all concerned, had better be dissolved. A divorce suit is rigorously treated as a legal fight between the petitioner on the one hand and the respondent on the other. If they themselves, who, after all, know the whole circumstances best, are agreed in wanting divorce, then they are said to be in collusion, and divorce is refused them, presumably in the interests of morality—

a procedure which appears fantastic enough to a mind not saturated with legal and ecclesiastical conventionalities.

Divorce, in short, is retrospective rather than prospective—a punishment for what has occurred rather than a dissolution of marriage for the benefits which will ensue. It is punitive and not remedial ; and the divorce court is, therefore, bound to set itself up as a public judge of private morality. Only in respect of property is its action prospective. A man is relieved from the obligation, or the risk, of supporting or handing on his property to children of his wife who are not his also.

But among the poor, considerations of property, in the ordinary sense of the word, are of less importance. Many working men have no insuperable objection to keeping another's child, provided they are fond of it and the marriage is otherwise satisfactory. It happens with some frequency that a man takes over, or provides for, his wife's illegitimate children, and such marriages do not appear to turn out any the worse on that account. The children are, as it were, only step-children ; the wife, to all intents and purposes, a widow. A working man's property, his capital or stock-in-



trade is his own self, not money or estate. Hence the marriage that does him most injury on the score of property is one which wears him out, and incompatibility assumes proportionately greater weight.

How far the divorce court succeeds now in dealing with the morals of the well-to-do is an open question. Sometimes its pronouncements must seem strangely naïve, unworldly, and perverse to petitioner and respondent. What can be said with some certainty is this: that divorce courts cannot hope to estimate justly the degree of moral delinquency among classes whose moral standards differ so greatly from the moral standards of those who compose the court. It is not a question here of whether moral delinquency should, or should not, be judged. The point is, that it cannot be; that the punishment cannot be made to fit the crime. Divorce for the poor cannot be both punitive and just.

If, then, divorce is to be remedial instead of punitive, and adapted to the conditions of working-class life, the main general ground—the only practicable ground—of divorce among the poor, would be proven incapability on the part of husband and wife of carrying on a joint home fit for themselves and for their children to live in. And the

particular grounds would appear somewhat as follows, in order of importance :—

(1) *Mutual consent*, extending over a period of separation, and provided the interests of the children are properly safeguarded and the break-up of the home equitably arranged. The bar of collusion, with all the hard lying to which it gives rise, would thus be done away with. I have asked the opinion of a good many working men and women, and without a single exception they have agreed that the best of all reasons for a divorce is that husband and wife both desire it. ‘ ’Tis their business more’n anybody else’s. They knows what ’tis like for themselves, being married. And if they both of ’em wants a divorce, that shows they’re ripe for it. No doubt ’twould be bad for the children, but half of that’s only other people’s chatter that you’re a fool to take any heed of ; and anyhow, ’twould probably be worse for the children if their father and mother wanted to be divorced, and couldn’t.’

(2) *Evident incompatibility*, to include cases of what is expressively called a cat-and-dog life. Such cases, however, are likely to develop till divorce could be granted on some other, more definite ground.

(3) *Desertion*, provided it is not absence solely for the sake of employment, and having regard to the degree of destitution in which the wife has been left.

(4) *Permanent lunacy, or long imprisonment*, which are, in effect, desertion. Sentiment is on the side of the husband or wife who waits, and they, of course, would not desire divorce on these grounds. But in many other cases, especially among the poor, divorce or irregular connexions are the only alternatives which offer themselves.

(5) *Habitual cruelty*, well proved ; not the conventionalized cruelty to which the anomalies of the existing divorce law have given rise. And persistent cruelty to children if the husband or wife desired to remove them on that account. The degree of cruelty should be based on the opinion of witnesses, not merely on the opinion of the court as to what constitutes cruelty.

(6) *Habitual drunkenness*, or narcomania, resulting in the wreck of the home or definite injury to the children.

(7) *Aggravated adultery*.

(8) *Habitual adultery* on the part of either husband or wife.

(9) *Occasional adultery*, (a) on the part of the

wife ; (*b*) on the part of the husband if it results in the making of an affiliation order against him ; (*c*) on the part of either if it results in the transmission of contagious disease. Of these grounds for divorce, though (*c*) is punitive rather than remedial, it is, at any rate, definite, and few will probably be found to dissent from it ; (*b*) is of more importance among the poor than among the well-to-do. An order of, say, three-and-sixpence weekly against a working man means very appreciable harm to his wife and family. But if the making of an affiliation order were taken as a ground for divorce, then the law relating to those orders would have to be more carefully administered, and appeals against them allowed. Young men and girls are not so chaste as the illegitimacy returns would indicate ; and comparatively little stress is laid by the poor on unchastity among the unmarried, partly because of their general forgivingness, and partly because they recognize that it is not unchastity, but the chastity demanded by our civilization, which is unnatural. The pleasant fiction that it is always the wicked man who seduces the unwilling maid, would have to be brought into line with reality ; the fact faced that the maiden's unwillingness is sometimes, at all events,

an afterthought. At present too many men are victimized by the unscrupulous relatives of girls not strictly chaste ; and cases occur where a girl who has had a child chooses out as its putative father, among the men with whom she has had connexion, the one who is reputed to possess a little money or is earning the best wages ; and he is condemned by the magistrates to pay for the upbringing of a child which might have been, but is not, his.

The advisability of putting husband and wife on a legal equality as regards occasional adultery has been much obscured by the present political conflict between the sexes. Admitting that the moral delinquency is the same on either side, the fact still remains that the result is not the same ; and by the result only can unfaithfulness be judged in practice. For the act of unfaithfulness in itself is a momentary deed, the outcome of an impulse become uncontrollable, an outward sign of an inward state of mind ; and neither the state of the mind, nor the temptation, nor the strength of the impulse can be estimated. But the result, so long as a husband is liable for the support of his wife and children, and she is not liable for the support of him and his, is plainly different. The injustice, if injustice there be, lies not in the law



which takes that into account, but in the nature of things, whereby women bear the children. In other words, it is what may be called a primary injustice, irremediable by laws. Besides which, whether custom, which sanctions more sexual freedom for men than for women, is right or wrong, it is indisputable that unfaithfulness on the woman's part has the greater disintegrating effect on marriage and on the home. Among the poor, certainly, a higher standard of morality is exacted from the woman. A wife may say of her husband : ' I don't care what he does so long as I don't see 'em at it ; 'twouldn't be no use to care.' But the husband would not say the same of his wife. Fair or not, there the difference is, and its recognition seems to be for the best.

Possibly, even probably, this inequality between the sexes will diminish in the future. If so, well and good. It exists at present ; and what needs altering first, in this respect, is not the law, but public opinion. For laws which race ahead of social custom are notoriously unsuccessful, and divorce law, in particular, requires the support of public opinion. Undoubtedly a great deal of life-long misery could be avoided if the divorce court were open to the poor. But—and it cannot be stated

too plainly—if an amended divorce law is to act successfully among the poor, then middle-class and ecclesiastical prepossessions on the subjects of morality and property must be strictly subordinated to the actual effect in life of such divorces. It is useless to divorce the poor for moral reasons with which they do not agree, and for reasons connected with property, which are of secondary importance to them ; else sympathy amongst the neighbours is sure to veer in favour of the guiltier party, and the greatest of all safeguards against immorality and frivolous divorce suits will be nullified. The mere fact of the petitioner appealing to the law, a proceeding never popular among the better sort of working people, will sufficiently excite sympathy for the respondent.

It is a drawback in discussing divorce that one is compelled to emphasize the dark side of marriage. The marvellous fidelity, on the whole, of working-class married couples cannot be properly presented. Ideally, especially on a superficial view, married life among the poor leaves much to be desired. But when one bears in mind how at every turn its course is jolted and thwarted and tried by poverty, one gains a profound respect and admiration for it, and a still profounder respect for the working code

of morals on which it is based. It is a mud-spattered triumph, perhaps, but a triumph nevertheless, over circumstance and difficulties innumerable. And even now working-class morality is on the change. Statesmen are much perturbed by what is termed race-suicide. . . . The older-fashioned working man will not consider voluntary limitation of the family. To his mind it is unnatural and wicked. But the younger generation is keenly interested in its possibilities and personal advantages, and its advantages to the children who are born. Unsuitable marriage laws, a hard hand in the regulation of marriage, cannot but help that movement. It ought not to need repeating, yet it does need repeating, that love and lust—if a definite line, which in life does not exist, must be drawn between the two—are haphazard and reckless passions, not to be controlled by public law if they cannot be by private and social morality. Where divorce law has been absent or unsuitable, people have taken the law into their own hands, and doubtless will do. It would be better for the poor to continue seeking their solution of matrimonial difficulties in desertion, or in relations not legally recognized, than that they should, for the sake of legal divorce, submit themselves to conven-

tions which are neither theirs nor applicable to their conditions of life. Simple unfaithfulness or immorality, regulated to some extent by local public opinion, may easily prove better in effect than a grudging submission to ill-adapted marriage laws. And, indeed, an increase in irregular relations is just the result which may be anticipated, if by means of the divorce law an attempt is made to force upon the poor a morality which is not theirs.

The aim of divorce, it should never be forgotten, is to make the best of a bad job.

## 20. VARIOUS CONCLUSIONS

WHATEVER the value of socialism as a theory or an ideal or a political system, there stands this much to its credit ; it has had by far the greatest share in awakening our present-day consciousness that a nation is an indivisible body, every part of which must ultimately suffer if any one part becomes or remains diseased. In that awakening it was but natural that the fully articulate classes, among whom discussion is fast and fairly free, should concentrate their attention chiefly upon the very apparent diseases of the less articulate classes, which can only speak up for themselves, at best, through the comparatively clumsy machinery of elections and trade unions. Social reform has come very largely to mean reform of those inarticulate classes. They are different in their habits and customs ; therefore it seems they are probably wrong. Materially they are unsuccessful, else they would



have risen in life ; and therefore they must be wrong ; or at least, in an age which judges success in living by material prosperity, they are fit objects of pity. On that basis, the public interest in them has grown apace. In times past the poor, oppressed beyond endurance, have forced their grievances with violence upon those in authority ; and in general their action has been ratified by history. To-day the country is exceedingly well policed. But it is safe to say that never before has so much voluntary interest been taken in the welfare and the shortcomings of the poor, and in what the articulate classes feel ought to be their grievances, whether they are or not. The country so swarms with organizations for improving the lot of the poor, or the poor themselves, that big organizations to organize little organizations have been found necessary, and so on *ad infinitum*. Free and compulsory education is always going to do great things. Unemployment has ceased to be regarded as a misfortune that cannot be helped, a call to charity and nothing more. By both the great political parties it is treated as an evil that must be ended, or at any rate mended, if possible. No Royal Commission, except perhaps the Divorce Commission, has ever excited] [so

much interest as the one which recently issued Majority and Minority Reports upon the Poor Laws and relief of distress. Books dealing with the poor increase. They need not now be lurid to find readers, though it is still an advantage if they are humorous. It is significant that in *The Condition of England*<sup>1</sup>—a peculiarly sensitive impression which its author will use presumably as a starting-point for his future legislative work—Mr. Masterman treats the poor, not as the *débris* of our civilization, but as an integral part of it, as the most hopeful part indeed.

‘England, for the nation or foreign observer, is the tone and temper which the ideals and determinations of the middle class have stamped upon the vision of an astonished Europe. It is the middle class which stands for England in most modern analyses. . . .

‘But below this large kingdom, which for more than half a century has stood for “England,” stretches a huge and unexplored region which seems destined in the next half-century to progress towards articulate voice, and to demand an increasing power. It is the class of which Matthew Arnold, with the agree-

<sup>1</sup> *The Condition of England*, by C. F. G. Masterman, M.P.

able insolence of his habitual attitude, declared himself to be the discoverer, and to which he gave the name of the "Populace." . . .

‘The Multitude is the People of England.’

Mr. Masterman quotes with approval a saying of Renan’s, to the effect that ‘the heart of the common people is the great reservoir of the self-devotion and resignation by which alone the world can be saved.’ And there precisely, in that question of heart, lies one of the greatest obstacles to an understanding between the classes and the masses. Investigate the common people’s outward conditions of life, but how investigate that heart of theirs, which they do not wear upon their sleeve for those whom they consider daws to peck at? Appeal to their heart and head, but how be sure that they will not reject the appeal with scorn because its proportion of heart to head is not the proportion they hold good? For among the poor the heart takes a very decided precedence of the head. The most open-minded interest in them is called exploration by those interested. By the poor themselves it is more often called curiosity, an impertinence—such an impertinence as would be condemned by everybody if a doctor, without being called, went to

a well-to-do household and said oracularly : ‘Consumption is a curse. I wish to know how many inches each member of this household keeps his or her window open at night, and what you each have for meals, and how it is cooked, and how many baths each person has a week ; for the skin is an important organ. Also I wish to know, for completeness’ sake, how many thousands a year the head of the household earns, and what the daughters have for pin-money. By the by, burn your Turkey carpets and plush curtains ; they harbour microbes. It is nothing to medical science that those dust-collecting ornaments were gifts. Efficiency has no room for sentiment. I shall continue coming until each person satisfies me on all those points, and for my visits you will have to pay, if not directly in fees, then indirectly, through the rates and taxes.’ Is not the income-tax—the most frequently evaded of all taxes—still denounced as inquisitorial by those fortunate enough to have taxable incomes ? The poor hate being questioned. ‘I can’t *bear* for people to be inquisitive,’ says Bettesworth, the Surrey labourer.<sup>1</sup> ‘What’s the use o’ talking to they

<sup>1</sup> *The Bettesworth Book : Talks with a Surrey Peasant, and Memoirs of a Surrey Labourer : a Record of the Last Days of Frederick Bettesworth*, by George Bourne.

question-asking hellers?' I often hear. 'They asks 'ee questions wi'out end, an' so long as you wags your tail an' tells 'em what they wants to hear, they goes on wasting their time, an' yours too. But so soon as you begins to tell 'em the truth, what you thinks, an' they don't like it, an' p'raps you can't explain yourself proper, then "Good day!" they says, an' walks away. An' all o'it don't make things no better. You'm down; they'm up. They've got you down, an' down they means to keep 'ee. An' all you tells 'em only gives 'em the advantage for to do so. 'Tisn't no use their talking. What they gives 'ee one way, they makes 'ee pay for another, aye! an' pay dear. They don't mean no harm, p'raps, but they does it. They can't help o'it. 'Tis their way. Some things they makes better, others worse. 'Tis all the same in the long run. If you want help, help yourself, always was an' always will be; an' that sort o' help don't make 'ee feel dubious 'bout it nuther.'

Such an outburst may seem unreasonable, suspicious, and ill-natured. At all events, it is typical, the outcome of hard experience, and it has to be reckoned with like any other set of class opinions. And whether unreasonable or not,



one needs only imaginative sympathy, or, better still, a similar experience, to feel much the same, whatever opinion one may form about it afterwards. 'Put yourself in his place,' Miss Loane and Lady Bell repeat.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Miss Loane complains that it is exceedingly difficult to get from the poor any truthful information about themselves. But why should they give it—speaking always from their point of view? One of their nicknames for an inspector is 'the bogyman.' After several years of life in a working man's home as one of the family—not from necessity exactly, nor yet as an investigator, but from choice—I confess frankly that I should certainly hoodwink an inspector, not simply for the sheer joy of balking him, but as revenge for his intrusion into our home. Certainly investigation must precede effective aid (though it is still doubtful whether simple generosity does not oftener hit the mark), and for understanding, knowledge is needful. But that form of interest in the poor which relies overmuch upon inspection and investigation

<sup>1</sup> *The Queen's Poor : Life as they find it in Town and Country. The Next Street but One. From their Point of View. An Englishman's Castle. Neighbours and Friends*, by M. Loane. *At the Works : A Study of a Manufacturing Town*, by Lady Bell.

may so easily take wrong lines, may so easily defeat itself.

‘The history of a few working-class families observed for a long period,’ declares Miss Loane, whose experience as a Queen’s Nurse is unrivalled, ‘affords more valuable data than any number of isolated facts.’ Or, one might add, sociological investigations. Those who go to a few of the poor with sympathy and affection for them as individuals, as fellow men and women, are likely to learn more—of good, chiefly—than ever they thought there was to be learnt; but those who descend thither as impartial investigators, or with a merely idealistic sympathy and affection for the mass, will gain next to nothing. It is the spirit that quickeneth, as much in social reform as in religion, as much among the poor as among their so-called betters.

Aloof interest, however acute, scientific and statistical investigation, however thorough, cannot lay hold of spirit. A simply idealistic love for the poor can do no more than see darkly its trend and force. Only a personal love and friendship, a genuine intimacy, can hope to follow the workings of their spirit and to fathom the complex motives for their actions. A change of method

is needed in approaching them. Miss Loane's vigorous paragraph on short cuts to sociological knowledge cannot be taken too deeply to heart :

‘ It is exceeding difficult for the upper classes to gain any fair idea of the ordinary domestic relations among the poor, and when they seek for information they too often forget to make allowance for the fact that the chosen teachers are all more or less blinded by their profession. Is it reasonable to ask the club doctor and the district nurse if the lower classes are healthy, to ask the coroner if they are sober and know how to feed their children, the police magistrate if they are honest and truthful, the relieving officer if they are thrifty, the labour master if they are industrious, the highly orthodox clergyman if they are religious, and then call the replies received, KNOWLEDGE OF THE POOR ? ’

Yet such, of course, has been the usual procedure !

That a more reasonable, a more human interest in the poor is at last coming into being, is evidenced by the above-mentioned books ; by the bare fact that publishers, readers, and a measure of success, have been found for a considerable number of volumes, all of them intimate

studies at first hand of life among the poor, and all of them controverting a host of too easily accepted notions about this subject. Mr. Masterman's is mainly a study at second hand, in the same sense that history is a study at second hand, of first-hand material. It is a survey of results attained. Its title, *The Condition of England*, will bear two meanings. It refers to the condition of England during the first decade of the twentieth century, and also to the many new standpoints from which that condition is now being investigated.

The extremely rapid growth of interest in the poor has carried with its definite advantages certain equally definite disadvantages. It has overgrown its age, so to speak; is somewhat hectic, very startled, and in a desperate hurry. It would be amusing, were it not so depressing, to watch the Labour members, for instance, trying to drag labouring men (for their own good) into agreement with views which they are supposed to hold, but which, as a matter of fact, they do not hold when it comes to acting upon them. (Hence Mr. Masterman's paradox, that 'socialism gathers strength in good times, but wanes in bad.') 'What on earth be 'em kicking up such a buzz about?' asks the poor man in wonderment when

the newspapers devote headlines to his affairs, and new Acts, with new penalties attached, come tumbling upon his head from on high. After being left to fend for himself—with a success much greater in reality than in appearance—he suddenly finds himself regarded as incapable of taking care of himself in any respect whatever. He sees, dimly perhaps, that his democratic leaders flatter him and hold him in contempt at the same time. He is treated like a child badly brought up by its parents, a child very wronged and very naughty. If he could, and if he would, express his own private opinion with a frankness which he has found to be inexpedient, and with a particularity for which elections afford no scope, his well-wishers would be more than surprised. ‘Why,’ they would ask, ‘should he still be so ungrateful and resentful? See what we have done for him. See what we have given him.’ Miss Loane provides a partial explanation : ‘After all, giving is an exercise of power, and we must not expect that the persons who suffer our kindness will find it a wholly pleasurable experience.’ The difficult art of giving, it seems, lies very much in giving people what they really desire, what they are ready and waiting for. In other words, it



requires boundless tolerance and patience. Reforms are needed badly enough in many directions, but it should always be borne in mind that what seems reform to the giver may be reformatory to the recipient. That which dissatisfies the poor man in his own life is not, as a rule, what horrifies the legislating onlooker. And it cannot be denied that the poor man knows his own life better than any one else can know it for him.

The rapid growth of interest in the poor—I am, of course, very far from denying that it is a good and a most necessary thing—has had another result of doubtful advantage. The quicker a forced march, the greater the number who fall out at different stages and march no more. Similarly, there is at the present time nothing approaching any uniformity of attitude towards the poor on the part of the not-poor. ‘The rich despise the working people; the middle classes fear them,’ remarks Mr. Masterman. But the diversity of attitudes is by no means so simple as that. I shall not forget the look of a lady at a literary luncheon, who asked me if I did not find the habit of ‘week-ending’ greatly interfere with Society, and to whom I replied that I hardly knew, because in working for a fisherman it was

my duty most of the summer to take people out in boats for two shillings an hour, and sometimes tips. Working for a fisherman? Yes ; most interesting and healthy. Work with the hands is no longer shameful. But tips ! Tips ! (Let me add, however, that the lady made a good recovery from the shock.) The well-to-do man may fully believe that the poor man is his equal in the sight of God, and perhaps even in the sight of man, but he does not feel the poor man sufficiently his equal to hobnob with him and introduce him to his women-folk, however perfect in propriety the poor man may be. A lawyer, say, may go so far as to admit that a fisherman is a specialist, fully as learned in his own branch of knowledge as a K.C., but he will not have for him the same fellow-feeling that he has for a doctor or for the most hated professional opponent. The latter, the involuntary, is the kind of attitude I mean. It comes uppermost in times of stress, and almost always prevails in the long run.

To name only a few of such attitudes towards the poor : there is that general attitude, spoken of 'rather seriously' by Mr. Pett Ridge,<sup>1</sup> which makes mischief and damage by rich men's sons

<sup>1</sup> *Speaking rather Seriously*, by W. Pett Ridge.

a case of 'boys will be boys,' but by poor men's sons a case for the police court. There is what, for the sake of distinction, may be called the Old Tory ideal of 'the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate,' and its modern equivalent, 'the poor man in his East End and the rich man in his West.' It is, among the various attitudes, not that which the poor themselves understand and sympathize with least. At its best, it has room for many kindly relationships. At its worst, it more than merits the irony of Anatole France :

'He [the poor man] asks what goodness is, because goodness is not in him, and he is devoid of virtue. I answer him, "The knowledge of goodness resides in virtuous men ; and good citizens carry within them a proper respect for the law. . . . For the duty of the poor is to defend the good things belonging to the rich ; and this is how the union betwixt citizens is maintained. This is goodness and good order. Again, the rich man has his serving-man bring out a basket full of bread, which he distributes to the poor ; and this is goodness again." These are the lessons this rough ignorant fellow requires to be taught.'

Industrially, the same attitude is apt to express itself somewhat thus: 'So long as the beggars do their work properly and I pay them what I ought (according to me), why not let well alone? What they do and how they live, outside their work, is no concern of mine. They're getting too damn'd lazy and cheeky with their talk about rights. I believe my wife takes them things when they're ill, but I tell her she's sure to catch something or other in their filthy slums. She'd far better pay for another district nurse, if she wants to, or send an inspector.'

The fine democratic ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and *Vox populi, vox dei*, degenerate pitifully, amid political rough and tumble, to the cynicism and moral unscrupulousness of election managers. In the intellectual field we admire with a shiver the boundless self-confidence of a Fabian Society in the direction of knowing what is good for people and managing them to their own advantage. At the opposite pole we have that charitable attitude which, basing itself upon such axioms as 'The poor always ye have with you,' is apt to take the diseases of the body politic and social as inevitable and a matter of course; as fortunate opportunities for the exercise of

virtuous charity. 'If there were no poor,' I have heard such people argue, 'it would be Christianity's loss. Therefore we must have poor.'

The imperialistic attitude, which regards the poor, subconsciously if not consciously, as a kind of subject race, to be made efficient not so much for the benefit of themselves as for that of the dominant classes, is common enough. And there is the highly practical attitude which would deny preference and sentiment and all the finer feelings to those in want; which, looking upon them as defective machines, tots up the nitrogen and hydrocarbons in their food, regardless of the fact that good digestion waits on appetite, and measures their house comfort in cubic feet by the amount of air-space in their rooms—an attitude combated by Miss Loane when she explains that a disused front parlour affords to many a woman of the better-to-do lower classes scope for a beneficial house-pride in which otherwise she could not indulge. Finally, there is the unpractical, sentimental attitude, the gullibilities of which have been sufficiently exposed. The Reports of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law reflect two separate attitudes towards the poor, rather than set forth two contrary



methods of dealing with poverty and destitution. Both Majority and Minority treat the poor too much as inferiors. The Majority's proposed poor law reminds me of a home for children where, though there is sometimes scarcely enough to eat, a lump or two of sugar can usually be sneaked for the stomach's delight; whereas that of the Minority reminds me oftener of a barrack where there is always a sufficiency of plain, nourishing food, not over tasty, but never a lump of sugar can be stolen because everything is under lock and key, and is weighed out. The essential difference between these two homes would be in the attitude towards the children, not in the management of the sugar-bags. The Minority's proposals, admirable though some of them are, and highly systematized, waken in me the same sort of horror as a huge piece of machinery which, should one have the misfortune to tumble into it, will go on grinding and will crush one's vitals out. 'Must my friends,' I ask myself, 'because they are poor and sometimes hungry, must I myself, if I come to grief, be shot into that appalling turnip-slicer, for commerce and an army of officials and specialists to feed upon, as a condition of getting something to eat? They might, as they say, be able to do

away with extreme poverty—thank God, if they would do away with the work-houses!—but there are worse things than poverty. What can they think of the poor to erect such a system of industrial conscription, with “the likes o’ they” to run it, of course?’

And nearly everything does depend on what they think of the poor. As a personal experience to the point, I find that though my ‘gentleman and lady’ acquaintances like to meet my working-class friends, and accept invitations to tea and so forth with pleasure to everybody concerned, they nearly always end by solemnly advising me (for my own benefit) to quit the fisherman’s house where I have found a home and all that home means, and to go adrift once more among ‘people of my own position.’ What, when cornered, they do not succeed in showing is, that it would be beneficial. And did I live among the poor as a clergyman, or teacher, or political worker, as ‘something superior and improving,’ not simply as one of themselves, glad to share, so far as may be, their life and work, to help and be helped, then no objection would be made. There is much kindness in the attitude of these advisers, together with a deep-seated misunderstanding, and in

consequence a subtle, ineradicable, hardly conscious contempt. And on the other side, a bitterness—the bitterer for want of expression — takes possession of the poor man's mind when he is made to feel, without being able to distinguish or explain, a confusion of such attitudes hemming him in round about, each containing some good and more good intentions, coupled with a contempt mostly unspoken, but none the less perceptible; each attitude more articulate nowadays than he is himself. 'The likes o' they,' he says in his more charitable moments, 'bain't no better 'n we be, after the rate; only they got the pull over 'ee, and they hangs on to it; that's where 'tis.'

Meanwhile, what is the attitude of the poor towards themselves and towards the life which, after all, they and they only have to live? That is the unknown, but surely not the least important factor. And, again, who are the poor, what are they, how are they to be distinguished from the not-poor? The answer to this second question carries with it some answer to the first, besides pointing the way to such general guiding principles of action, and maybe of reform, as one dares to lay down.

It is plain that neither income nor even want of capital will differentiate the poor man from other men. Payment by the week, with its well-marked effect on household arrangements, goes further. The manual labourer is himself his own stock-in-trade ; but so are the lawyer, the politician, the doctor, the author. Formal education, in the ordinary sense of the word, does not supply a definition, though it is customary to speak of the poor as 'the uneducated.' Many members of the middle and upper classes are too badly educated for any sort of work, whilst very many poor people are splendidly educated in subjects which seldom figure in school curricula, such as horse-management, farming, fishing, machinery, traffic, making a little go a long way. 'Culture, as a reality,' says Miss Loane, 'exists far more generally than novelists and newspaper writers would have us believe, although evidence of it may not be apparent at the first glance.' Among the Middlesbrough ironworker families Lady Bell found every gradation, from Greek and French scholars to the man who read books only on religious 'dis-beliefs' ; from the nice old woman who wanted to learn to read 'something with a little love and a little murder,' to the sensible people who said they

had something better to do. Nor will speech and manners serve the purposes of definition. Men cannot be classified according to the number of times they say 'damn' and 'bloody' in an hour ; dialect is a beautifully flexible means of communication between those who speak it. Etiquette, though different, is just as strict among the poor as among other classes ; their true politeness frequently a thing to marvel at. 'If,' says Miss Loane again, 'we inquired closely into the complaints of modern deterioration of manners in the lower classes, we should find that the real sting does not lie in actual rudeness, but in the shock of receiving courtesy when respect was demanded.'

There is, in fact, no clear and inclusive definition of 'the poor.' The best that can be done is to cut, as far as possible, a middle line through the various classes, find types, and compare them. Obviously it is a difficult task, not to be done without that intimate experience which will be denied to those who undertake it in the spirit of a scientific investigation ; and it is here that the value appears of books which treat the poor above all as human beings.

In moving from the one *milieu* to the other and back again, the change one specially notes is



of tradition and atmosphere ; almost the only readjustment that has to be made in oneself, is mental. (Not that one's wits have to be polished up on entering the society of educated people ; mentally their pace always strikes me as rather slow and restful ; they have invented so many certainties to repose upon, and in their conversation the great disturbing problems of human existence are tacitly ruled out.) Likewise, the critical differences between the poor and not-poor are of spirit, outlook, morals, sensibility, and sentiment, methods of thought—all that we commonly include under the one term mentality. There the distinction is so striking that it cannot be waived as a mere difference in degree ; and Mr. Masterman is led to declare :

‘ Most present-day failures in legislation and social experiment are due to neglect of this fact. It has been assumed that the artisan is but a stunted and distorted specimen of the small tradesman ; with the same ideals, the same aspirations, the same limitations : demanding the same moulding towards the fashioning of a completed product. We are gradually learning that “ the people of England ” are as different

from, and as unknown to, the classes that investigate, observe, and record, as the people of China and Peru.'

Throughout Miss Loane's works constant reference is made to the endurance, generosity, and forgivingness of the poor, as well as to their failings both apparent and real. Her conclusions may perhaps be fairly summarized in three quotations, the first from *The Next Street but One*, the second from 'Characteristics of the Poor' in *From their Point of View*, and the third from a chapter in *An Englishman's Castle*, for which she has invented a speaker whom she humorously calls 'The Fatigued Philanthropist' :

'The more one sees of the poor in their own homes, the more one becomes convinced that their ethical views, taken as a whole, can be more justly described as different from those of the upper classes than as better or worse.

'When one begins to know the poor intimately, visiting the same houses time after time, and throughout periods as long as eight or ten years, one becomes gradually convinced that in the real essentials of morality they are, as a whole, far more advanced than is generally

believed, but they range the list of human virtues in a different order from that commonly adopted by the more educated classes. Generosity ranks far before justice, sympathy before truth, love before chastity, a pliant and obliging disposition before a rigidly honest one. In brief, the less admixture of intellect required for the practice of any virtue, the higher it stands in popular estimation.’<sup>1</sup>

‘Then we are so anxious about the morals of the poor. We especially find fault with them for want of truth, and do not seem in the least aware that they constantly accuse us of wilful and interested lying. . . . Would it not be fairer to say that rich and poor, men and women, vary chiefly in their ideas as to when it is excusable, justifiable, or even compulsory to deceive? . . . The poor often tell what seem to the rich wholly gratuitous lies, but they will tell the truth on occasions when the rich would

<sup>1</sup> To this Mr. Masterman adds : ‘It is the emotional, indeed, against the intellectual : to one point of view, life in an incomplete condition of development ; to another, life lived nearer to its central heart. Certainly, in the combination of Christian and ethical dicta which make up the popular moral code of modern civilization, the standard of the poor is nearer to the Christian standard.’ Herbert Spencer’s opinion to the effect that, as a foundation for morality, the emotions are superior to the intellect, is also to the point.

lie unblushingly. The poor are generally honest, though rarely honourable, and neither honour nor honesty are as common among the upper classes as we like to believe. Listen to candidates for an examination. . . . The examiner is an enemy, and if he can be deluded, there is no harm in deluding him, and this state of mind is often fostered by otherwise conscientious teachers. If physical examination of the candidates is demanded, there are no bounds to what they consider permissible deception. . . . Again, is it the poor who travel with a time-expired season ticket, or in a higher class than they have paid for? What is the average morality of the well-to-do with regard to the treatment of hired furniture, horses, bicycles, etc.? Why this perpetual assumption that we know so much better than the poor, and on every conceivable point?’

Mr. George Bourne, in two books which are so beautiful, so simply true, and so heartfelt that it would seem an irreverence to slap them on the back with literary praise, continually finds cause to marvel at ‘the rich reserves of English fortitude in our peasantry,’ ‘the unconquerable

good temper,' the kindliness, 'the centuries of incalculable struggle and valiant endurance.'

'And now, having realized that the circumstances are exceptional, it is becoming increasingly plain to me that Bettesworth is as other men, or—what is more to the purpose—there are thousands of other men who are as Bettesworth is. He is a type of his class. . . . And so, when I hearken to Bettesworth, I feel that it is not to an exceptional man, and still less to an oddity that I am listening ; but that in his quiet voice I am privileged to hear the natural, fluent, unconscious talk, as it goes on over the face of the country, of the English race, rugged, unresting, irresistible. The Race, not the aggregate of individuals but the Stirp or Stock that puts forth Bettesworths by the million, and rejoices in its English soil and loves the hard knocks of adventure and necessity everywhere. The native orderliness, the self-reliance, the indomitable vigour of our English breed unimpaired as yet by culture, this is what Bettesworth's talk means to me.'

With a delicacy of perception that is denied to Miss Loane's robust and humorous common sense,



her practical hail-fellow charity, he delves into old Bettesworth's talk to find the mind-quality which underlies and supports those other moral qualities. It is difficult to figure a type of mind so living yet so remote from the accepted standards of to-day.

‘Of course, looked at from the ordinary educated standpoint, the old man must be an unsatisfactory spectacle, very irritating to those who would improve him, for truly his ignorance of book-learning is profound. . . . Although he may have some qualified respect for the people who would instruct him in this sort of thing, he betrays not the slightest desire to resemble them. On the other hand, for people whose worth is independent of culture and refinement of manner he has a generous appreciation. Of several wealthy farmers he speaks in tones of warmest approval, perhaps because they are alive to his own value, unrecognized by the preaching colonel and the refined classes. But his admiration is only whole-hearted for men of his own class who are really effectual. . . . Still, there is no doubt that Bettesworth regrets his lack of educa-

tion. . . . But on the whole, it is probable that he knows all he need know about books. They could teach him nothing of much value to him, for the things he still hungers to learn are of another sort, and are to be acquired in another way.'

'The receptivity of the man's brain was what struck me. One pictured it pinked and patterned over with thousands of unsorted facts—legions of them jostling one another without apparent arrangement. Yet all were available to him; at will he could summon any one of them into his consciousness. A modern man would have had to stop and sift and compare them, and build theories and systems out of all that wealth of material. Not being modern, Bettesworth did not theorize; his thoughts were like the dust-atoms seen in a sunbeam. But though he did not "think," still a vast common sense somehow or other flourished in him, and these manifold facts were its food.'

'From such deep sources of physical sanity his optimism welled up, that he really needed, or at any rate craved for, no spiritual consolation. Like his remote ancestors who first invaded this island, he had the habit of taking

things as they came, and of enjoying them greatly on the whole.'

'Again, lest it be urged that even Bettesworth's enjoyment is tragical in its ignorance of æsthetic pleasures, old Bettesworth, who "*do* like to see things growin'," who stands up to exclaim to the sun piercing the winter haze, "That's right! The sunshine's what we wants!" or who in a March gale asks enthusiastically, "En't it nice to lay in bed and hear the wind roar?"—this old Bettesworth and his kind are not without poetry because they lack verse. Out of their wind-blown, sunburned toil, they suck a profit more than we who live within doors may understand. It seems to me, too, that there is some profit for Bettesworth—an enviable profit—in the mere fact of living a brave life.'

The second of the above extracts gives the clue to that vast difference in mentality, in method of thought, which underlies the more evident differences between the poor and the articulate classes—a difference much on a par with the loss that any impression sustains as soon as it comes to be written down. In one of her books Miss

Loane complains of the illogicality of the poor ; she remarks on the undue importance they attach to the actual handling of the coin in money matters. It is quite true. I have found it impossible really to convince children old enough to go out to work that if we have half-a-dozen mackerel left over and sell them for a silver sixpence, and their mother has in consequence to buy seven or eight pennyworth of fish for our supper, we are less well off than if we had kept the mackerel themselves for supper and had gone without the sixpence. On the other hand, they are to a certain extent right, for seeing is still believing, and the tangible, visible money is decidedly, if irrationally, more encouraging than a profit and loss account, when the work to be faced may mean lying in an open boat all night, or hooking mackerel in the chill of the day before breakfast, with an occasional bucketful of water skatting inboard over one's head. The poor are not logical ; they neither make any great use of, nor are at home in, logical processes of thought ; but in compensation they have an astonishing faculty of allowing for that penumbra of hazy or apparently unrelated facts, thoughts, and minor impressions which, in life and in the human consciousness, always surrounds and

modifies every fact, thought, and major impression. Theirs is the impressionistic, the intuitional, method. Instead of trying to proceed from hypothetical premisses to logical conclusions, they feel rather than reason their way from a mass of perceptions too large and mixed for logic, to conclusions which are hypothetical in the sense that they cannot be logically proved, but which, probably, are equally sound in their bearing on real life. The educated man attempts to reason a matter out; the poor man—in his own phrase—*to weigh it up*.<sup>1</sup>

As an actual instance of the two methods of dealing with a subject: my skipper and myself made some experiments with a small otter-trawl, the use of which we had to learn for ourselves.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. H. G. Wells, in *First and Last Things*, puts the point very neatly: 'It is true you can make your net of logical interpretation finer and finer, you can fine your classification more and more—up to a certain limit. But essentially you are working in limits, and as you come closer, as you look at finer and subtler things, as you leave the practical purpose for which the method exists, the element of error increases. Every species is vague, every term goes cloudy at its edges; and so, in my way of thinking, relentless logic is only another name for a stupidity—for a sort of intellectual pigheadedness.' It is obvious, too, how the weighing-up method exposes the poor man to the political propaganda (so piquantly analyzed in Mr. Graham Wallas's *Human Nature in Politics*) which is based on, 'When I shriek a thing forty times, it's true'—and would expose him still more but for his notorious suspiciousness.

<sup>2</sup> An otter-trawl is a bag-shaped net for dragging along the bottom. The mouth of it is kept open not by a beam but by two upright wooden wings, or otters, one on each side, which travel obliquely against the water, and in so doing spread farther from each other the faster the trawl is towed.



One question was, whether we ought to tow it with or against the tide. I attempted to tackle the subject on scientific lines; that is to say, I tried to take first of all the effect on it of one set of conditions, and one only—those which determine the spread of the net, the distance between the otters. Suppose, I said, the wind is dead abeam, capable of sailing the boat four miles an hour, and the tide is two miles an hour. Then, with the tide, the boat will travel six miles an hour, and against it two. But the spread of the net depends on the speed the otters travel through the water, which itself is moving after or against the boat. And in both cases the otters travel four miles an hour *through the water itself*. Therefore the spread of the net ought to be the same with or against the tide. ‘Aye,’ said my skipper, ‘but thee hastn’t ’llowed for the surface currents, n’ eet for the lop, an’ thee’s got to get thy wind dead abeam both ways no matter how thee’s want to drag across the ground. An’ the tide ’ll be slacking up or making all the time, an’ the wind won’t stay the same, an’ there’s lots of other things you got to take into count so soon as you begins to weigh it all up. I bain’t going to hae thic. What you’m supposing, don’t never

happen, not all to once !' In other words, accurate and complete premisses were not ascertainable. My logical method, it will be admitted, would prove excellent for purely imaginary and controllable conditions, but for the many and complicated conditions of real trawling it is next to useless, convenient as a check on the other method, and no more. When my skipper has weighed the matter up—though he will not, I am sure, be able to tell me afterwards precisely what factors he has weighed up—there is little doubt that his conclusions will give us the better guidance. And otter-trawling is so very simple compared with human affairs.

The weighing-up method has its own defects, of course, which may at times lead to the gravest errors, but enough has been said, probably, to show that the poor have their own typical mental and moral characteristics, not necessarily inferior to, nor in the larger view less valuable than, those of other classes ; that their mental and moral state is not merely one of incomplete and poverty-stricken development.

An objection certain to be made is this : ' All these generalizations may be true of country folk, but what about the dwellers in our terrible

industrial towns?' When, a few years ago, one of us published a book chiefly on fishermen, in which he endeavoured to sum up the typical characteristics of the poor by saying that they have not only 'the will to live,' but, in a greater degree than any other class, 'the courage to live,' many such objections were made. 'It is doubtful, indeed,' said one critic, 'whether it is not just this element of the sea, with its spiritual call for adventure, pluck, resource, and hardihood, that makes the author so optimistic, and thus colours some of his conclusions about the poor man's life.' 'He probably,' said another critic, 'would find far less manifestation of it in the difficult darkness of the cities, where fear rather than courage is the driving force of common humanity.' Call the instinct of self-preservation fear, and fear will at once be found in plenty among the poor everywhere; but to do so is to imitate the little girl mentioned by Miss Loane, who was brought to book for killing a chicken, and protested, 'I didn't kill it, I didn't! I laid a stick on to it and it died.' The books, which treat the poor as human beings, lend no support whatever to the supposition that only fishermen, among poor men, possess 'the courage to live,' and that it is re-

placed by fear in the cities, although in the case of fishermen it may well be more apparent and picturesque. Mr. Bourne speaks of Bettsworth in his prime as living a 'varied life, careless, confident, and strong'; and repeatedly of the courage with which he faced old age, burdened with an epileptic, half-crazy wife. Lady Bell brings evidence and to spare of the existence of 'the courage to live' among the ironworkers of Middlesbrough, 'a place in which every sense is violently assailed all day by some manifestation of the making of iron.' Miss Loane, with her vast experience of the poor in town and country, makes no essential distinction between them. In the English translation of a book called *On the Tracks of Life*, the author, Dr. Leo G. Sera, says :

'There is a magnanimity about the plebeians in making a continual sacrifice of their persons and often of their own lives with a stoicism which, if it be sometimes unknown to themselves, is at other times really superior disdain. With few or no attachments to life, they often show themselves indifferent to it, and, both in their disputes and in the risks they run, they

exhibit a courage and indifference to death which are found only in brave men.

‘By the complete yielding up of themselves which they are always doing, and by the dissipation of their own lives, the plebeians bear some resemblance to the aristocratic type, and this latter type has much more in common with the former than with the middle-class type.’<sup>1</sup>

That view of the situation is especially interesting and to the point, because Dr. Sera is an Italian, and such an opinion from a foreigner supports the contention of those who find national distinctions less dividing than the gulf which separates different classes belonging to the same race and nation.

It is impossible here to survey the whole of the political ground by the light of these generalizations on the life of the poor. To look facts in the face is to recognize that government is not yet democratic; that the poor do not in practice initiate or in any great degree control the social legislation by which they benefit or suffer; and that the query, ‘How shall we, the articulate legis-

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.*, aristocratic in the Nietzschean sense; possessing an abundance of the ‘will to power,’ in accordance with Nietzsche’s definition: ‘Feeble will is oscillation and the loss of equilibrium; strong will is the orientation of instincts.’



lating classes, deal with the poor? ' still represents actuality. The last Licensing Bill, for example, was supposed to have been demanded by popular mandate. It divided itself into two parts, that dealing with 'the Trade' and that dealing with so-called temperance reform. It struck me as significant at the time that, in moving about a great deal among 'the masses,' I never heard from them a good word for the brewers, and scarcely a good word for the Bill as a whole ; the latter because the temperance-reform sections were, I think, felt to be a slur upon the working classes and an attempted infringement of their personal liberty. And almost, if not quite, alone among newspapers *The New Age* noticed that whilst the Lords would not hear of the proposals directly affecting the brewers, they were ready to consider those sections which would have interfered with the personal liberty, for good or ill, of the working classes. Commons and Lords were equally unrepresentative. With social legislation in general, doubts continually obtrude themselves as to whether so much interference with the personal lives of the poor is not at least unwarrantable ; doubts like those to which Miss Loane's experience gives rise :

‘ For many generations an innumerable multitude of charitable people have been deeply concerned in helping the poor : they have attacked the problems relating to them from the religious, the moral, the sentimental, the intellectual, the “ practical ” standpoints. All alike have failed almost completely either in reducing the number of the abjectly wretched, or of effecting any lasting improvement in their condition. And why? Chiefly, I believe, because they have one and all despised the home life of the poor, held it cheaply, as a thing of no moment.’

Is not, one asks, so much interference with that home life likely to engender a resentment, a deeper estrangement between the classes, dangerous for the welfare of all? Furthermore, the question demands answer : Is it not imprudent and inexpedient for the whole community, as well as for the poor, to handle their lives so lightly, with less than half-knowledge, and to risk the loss of those typical and valuable qualities which they have acquired gradually, or retained obstinately, through lengthy adaptation to their own conditions of life and by unending efforts to live up to their own standards? Is it good to force other conditions upon their

standards, other standards upon the conditions they have to live under? Would they not go on developing better, and above all more soundly, upon their own lines, if they were given the chance?

We need, in dealing with the poor, 'to act sincerely in the presence of our ideas'; not to hold large ideas and act upon small ones; not to respect the poor in literature and treat them as silly children, who cannot be expected to know what is good for them, when we come to legislation. One of the principal characters in Mr. Joseph Conrad's *Nigger of the Narcissus* is an old seaman who has spent his life in ships' forecastles with no promotion, no material success, and scarcely a month ashore. During a gale his blind endurance at the wheel saves the ship. It is, we are made to feel, the culmination of his life and the beginning of his end. Judged by the standards in use, his life would appear a thing most ineffectual, his death of no note. It is one of the triumphs of a wonderful book that we see the old man in his true relation to the sea, to human existence, to what are called the eternal verities; a good sea-labourer, and as such a heroic figure; a life commonplace enough, but a life well to have lived. The great wise man, the heroic figures of the Bible

and of literature, to whom homage is rendered, would they not now be dubbed ignorant, and be treated as so much material for social reformers to work upon? Their wisdom would be dealt with as beside the point, irrelevant. Their want of schooling would be thrown in their faces, as it is thrown in the faces of the poor. I witness almost every day educated people listening to old fishermen for their experience and quaintly expressed wisdom and knowledge of life, who, if it were suggested that the old fishermen's talk should be acted upon, would as good as call them old fools. Indeed, so strong is habit, that I do it myself, who ought to know better, after listening to them so much and watching their lives. Some grasp of the anomaly is implied, I imagine, in the insistence of the poor on 'seeing life' as a part of education, and their tolerance of the falls which 'seeing life' very frequently brings in its train. Mr. Masterman's praise of 'that zest and sparkle and inner glow of accepted adventure which alone would seem to give human life significance'; Miss Loane's assertion that, 'broadly speaking, the people who become and remain rich are those who accept all the responsibilities that life brings them, and even seek for more'; those ideas in books

meet with very ready approval. But how are they acted upon? The life of the poor is one long and rather grim adventure ; their responsibilities, compared with their means of sustaining them, are almost overwhelming. Many of them complain bitterly that 'the likes o' us toils an' slaves an' never gets no for'arder' ; far fewer regret the adventurousness of their lives or shy at their responsibilities. At times they seem hardly to be aware of either. Yet—as with Miss Loane's help we see more plainly than before—the social reformer singles out for attack on all sides just those two great factors in the poor man's moral training. Among the poor I have heard more echoes of ancient wisdom than ever elsewhere, and have seen it oftener acted upon ; but those, notwithstanding, are the people over whom—because they are ignorant of finance, science, and other of life's superficialities—the social reformer is anxious to play schoolmaster in all things. They are judged exclusively by the more apparent sorts of material success. In science, even, materialism has had its day. Why retain it in dealing with the poor?

Free and compulsory education exists for better or for worse ; it has to be accepted, together with



the profound influence it must necessarily exercise. In some ways it is undervalued by the poor ; in other ways absurdly overvalued. If they were only educated, they are apt to think, everything, including a rapid rise in life, would be easy and plain before them. In the *Reminiscences of a Stonemason*,<sup>1</sup> the excess of the stonemason's pride in his self-educational attainments over his pride in a hard-working, well-spent, and effective life, is almost pathetic. Usually, in conversation, the poor who have become newspaper readers recall their own valuable and interesting experiences and any stale nonsense they may have picked out of a cheap newspaper with equal satisfaction and a singular lack of discrimination. They have heard so much about education and reading as panaceas that, against their better sense as at other times expressed, they more than half believe it. The education given in our primary schools has been much criticized for its failure to teach useful, as opposed to examinational knowledge ; for the habits of inattention, thoughtlessness, and slipshod workmanship which many children seem to gain at school ; and for the false social ideals with which they are there infected. It is a phase, we

<sup>1</sup> Anonymous. Murray.

are told. Whenever I have asked working men the plain question, 'What education d'you think the kids ought to have, then?' the answer has always been the old-fashioned one, 'They ought to learn 'em to read and write and reckon *well*, which they don't do, and to speak up for themselves, so that them as can chatter shan't browbeat 'em down. After that they can go for'ard, if they'm minded, and they bain't spoiled for staying where they be.' That particular form of reply I have heard in Devonshire; but almost the same words come from Bettesworth, in Surrey—'readin', and writin', and summin', and to know how to right yourself.' The opinion of those who have brought the children into the world, and worked to bring them up, is not to be despised. The well-to-do have a large amount of voice in what their children shall be taught and the age at which they shall leave school. Working-class parents have practically none. Those who will have the responsibility of putting their children out to work might well be consulted as to the same children's education. They know, better than teachers, the life their children will probably have to lead; and they recognize, better than educationalists, that to know *how* to work, to

have the habit of working cheerfully and well, is more important than knowledge. As Miss Loane's 'Fatigued Philanthropist' very pointedly remarks, 'After all, do they not bring up a thousand times as many [children] as the rich, and make far less fuss over the matter? The supposition that they are indifferent to their children, and expect them to look after themselves at an early age, is ludicrously inaccurate.'

There is, however, another criticism to be made from a somewhat wider base. If that view, already mentioned, of a nation as an organized community be carried farther, it becomes evident that, so long as there are different sorts of work to be done, different types of mind will be required to do it well. What, then, does our educational system do to produce, or at least to encourage and develop, when found, different types of mind? Nothing at all, so far as the poor are concerned, except to promise technical education for those already well enough off to take advantage of it. The aim apparently is, to produce varying approximations to the clerk or teacher or minor professional man; to foster only one type of mind, that which responds readily to the cut-and-dried curriculum in vogue. Miss Loane refers to

the 'peculiarly distressing class of defectives, so little noted by statisticians, and so sadly familiar to small employers of labour—persons capable of acquiring literary education, and in some cases specially excelling in arithmetic, but unable to apply themselves to even the simplest forms of manual labour.' And there is the opposite class of defectives—those who can labour but cannot learn in school. The former type is encouraged to its own disaster ; the latter is labelled dunce, and is kept idling on at the tail of the class till the legal age of leaving, by which time the habit of idleness is confirmed. Under an educational system capable of recognizing and fostering different types of mind, neither extreme need be stigmatized as defective, each might be made useful in its own way. Miss Loane, in one place, favours a long education, because the children thereafter work more intelligently. But she takes care to say in another place that, almost without exception, the best husbands and fathers to be found among the poor have been men whose mothers 'learned 'em to work, and see'd they did their fair share.' (Mothers, be it noted, not teachers.) The apparent contradiction is nothing else than an argument in favour of different types

of education and different leaving-ages according to the probable nature of the work in store. That working-class parents wish their children to leave school early in order that they may make money out of infant labour, is in nine cases out of ten a fiction. They know that, for children with a lifetime's labour before them, 'getting at it gradual and early' is preferable to being brought to it suddenly and painfully, if at all, later on. (One notices among the poor that loafers are usually better spoken and better learnt than hard-working men.) There are some sorts of work which must be 'got at' early. Fishermen, for instance, hold firmly that a man must have been not only trained but *bred* to their trade. The finished product of the schoolroom and playground cannot be expected to take to fishing, with its exposure and call for endurance, its periods of trying idleness and of work severe beyond the powers of the average man. 'They an't got the heart, they an't got the guts,' fishermen say. In the fishery I know best there is not now a single youth coming on, though there is still a decent living to be got out of the sea. When they leave school they want 'softer jobs,' or none. Education must bear its share of the blame. The



Poor-Law Commissioners reported in favour of a change of curriculum in the schools. But more is needful than that. Until different types of mind are fully recognized and developed, not by different degrees of the same type of education, but by different types of education, extending not to one leaving-age but to suitable leaving-ages, the human resources of the nation cannot be properly organized.

‘Countless pages’ (concludes the stonemason in his *Reminiscences*) ‘have been written about poverty, but the sentence in the old book, “The destruction of the poor is their poverty,” contains the pith of the matter.’ A noteworthy by-product of the Tariff Reform and Budget controversies has been the free admission, by both the great political parties, that the poor do not receive economic justice. Social reform and economic reform have been much confused ; they stand confused in the public mind, except in so far as economic reform suggests robbing the rich, whilst social reform suggests, very unaccountably, mending the manners and customs of the poor only ; and, of course, economic and social reform do merge into and react upon one another. It may indeed be that they appear much the same thing from the point

of view of those who want to 'raise,' and otherwise modify by legal force, the personal lives of the poor ; but from the standpoint of the poor themselves they are quite distinct ; and the right and reason of the State to interfere is far from the same in both cases. Perhaps the difference may be put thus : a man's economic relations depend closely on the State, and the State should be a sleeping partner with one eye open, ready at all times to ensure not only shilling honesty between parties, but general honesty ; whereas a man's social relations and personal conduct are primarily his own affair, and the State should be a partner sound asleep unless violently awakened. For the State, though capable, theoretically at all events, of judging a man's economic transactions and position, is not capable of judging a man's life and self, and ought not to make a pretence of doing so except when crime, for example, forces its hand. Distinguished thus, economic and social reform appear very different in nature and effect. The first is warrantable and necessary ; the second is not, and in practice usually does more harm than good. To the poor, economic reform means a measure of justice between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' ; but social reform means 'police,'

whether they are really required or not. It involves that which Mr. John Burns so well protested against when he said in the House of Commons that, being by nature a kindly man, he was averse from the creation of new crimes.

Granted the above distinction between economic and social reform, most of the provisions of the Factory Acts, Food Adulteration Acts, and improved housing come under the economic category. The extreme importance of better housing is acknowledged. Miss Loane, whose opportunities of forming an opinion on the matter have been almost unique, declares that 'the housing of the poor is disgracefully bad, and often the matter is beyond their individual control.' 'Moreover, the poor are seldom or never in a position to put any pressure upon their landlords, and dare not make open complaints of the condition of their houses.' But it needs to live day by day in a working-man's house, even a comparatively good one, to realize how his life is hampered in every direction by the fact that he does not, and cannot, obtain value for his rent-money. On the other hand, if Mr. Pett Ridge, an open-minded and close observer, is to be believed, temperance reform, that typical example

of the social reformer's work, has achieved very little except the harassing of one class.

‘Reforms which have so far come in the drink habits of the people cannot be claimed by Parliament. . . . I wish the results of an Act were always as good as its intentions. It is certain that when the Houses of Parliament decided no child under fourteen should be served in a public-house unless as a messenger conveying a sealed bottle, they honestly believed they were doing the wise, judicious thing. The actual consequences, so far as my observation goes, have been that, whereas in former days the youngster was despatched with a jug and brought it back filled (taking slight toll on the way, more as a declaration of independence than from any appetite for the beverage), now the mother or father has to take the jug, and being inside the cheerful public-house, feels that courtesy demands a drink should be ordered for consumption on the premises. If acquaintances are met there, the silly procedure of treating is perhaps started.’

My own experience entirely bears out Mr. Pett Ridge's. If Sunday closing comes into force

we shall no doubt buy on Saturday nights a bottle of spirits, or get in half-a-dozen bottles of beer, and on Sundays we shall, I daresay, finish the lot in an aimless festivity, instead of discussing the news of the day over a couple of glasses of beer in a public-house. The Children Act, which forbade the public-house to children, has proved, in that respect, a kindness to everybody but the children.<sup>1</sup> If those journalists who belauded the Children Act, under the name of 'The Children's Charter,' could have realized how much undeserved insult to the poor was contained in their laudations, and how much resentment arose therefrom, they would have moderated their appeal to the shallower sentimentalism of their readers. Cigarettes have now an additional attraction to boys of any spirit. When they can smoke openly, they will smoke, as the saying goes, like furnaces. To make such laws is to render the law a farce, and to play the fool with one's fellow-men.

Social reform on the part of the legislating classes is, in effect, an attempt to modify lives

<sup>1</sup> 'The working man can no longer send a child to the public-house for his beer, so he either sends his daughter, *who probably is just not a child, and for that reason far more likely to come to harm*, or goes himself to the tavern—and stays there.' (A writer in the *Spectator*.)



hardly known, with results that cannot be foretold—a futile effort to improve the poor on the cheap. No statistics or inspections can grasp those imponderables of life, which alone count in the end. Miss Loane's books, and in a lesser degree the others, form one long protest against neglect of the imponderables in poor people's lives. It is observable that social reformers are demanding more and more inspection, a system the inherent defects of which are greater than its qualities. It is resented as an impertinence by the poor; it ignores the imponderables; it judges the lives of one class by the standards of another; and long before it attains efficiency, even within its own narrow limits, the cost has become prohibitive. Social reform based on such a system cannot but defeat itself.

It has been said that the cardinal difference between the lot of rich and poor is, that the former have more margin in which to remedy mistakes. It is exactly that inequality, that proportional difference of margin, which economic reform can remedy. It would give to the poor the opportunity of progressing in the only sound manner, by their own efforts and on their own lines. They have their ideals as much as any

other class, but not at present the same means of attaining them.

It will be noticed that the broad principles here advocated (not very systematic principles perhaps—how can they be in such a chaos?) are more akin to what has been called the Old Tory attitude than to most attitudes. They tend, in fact—if it is not stretching terms too far—towards a New Toryism or Nationalism, a Nationalism founded on respect for the poor ; less bent on ‘raising them out of their station’ than on providing them with justice in that station, and the chance of bettering themselves whenever by their own efforts they can do it ; sufficiently sensible of human brotherhood in the elemental things of life not to be under the illusion that equality necessitates sameness ; prepared to honour the poor for what they are, where they are ; confident that there are many different lines of development, and therefore tolerant of other class-customs and class-aims ; and conscious always that, as the poor so often say, it takes all sorts to make a world—or a well-organized nation.

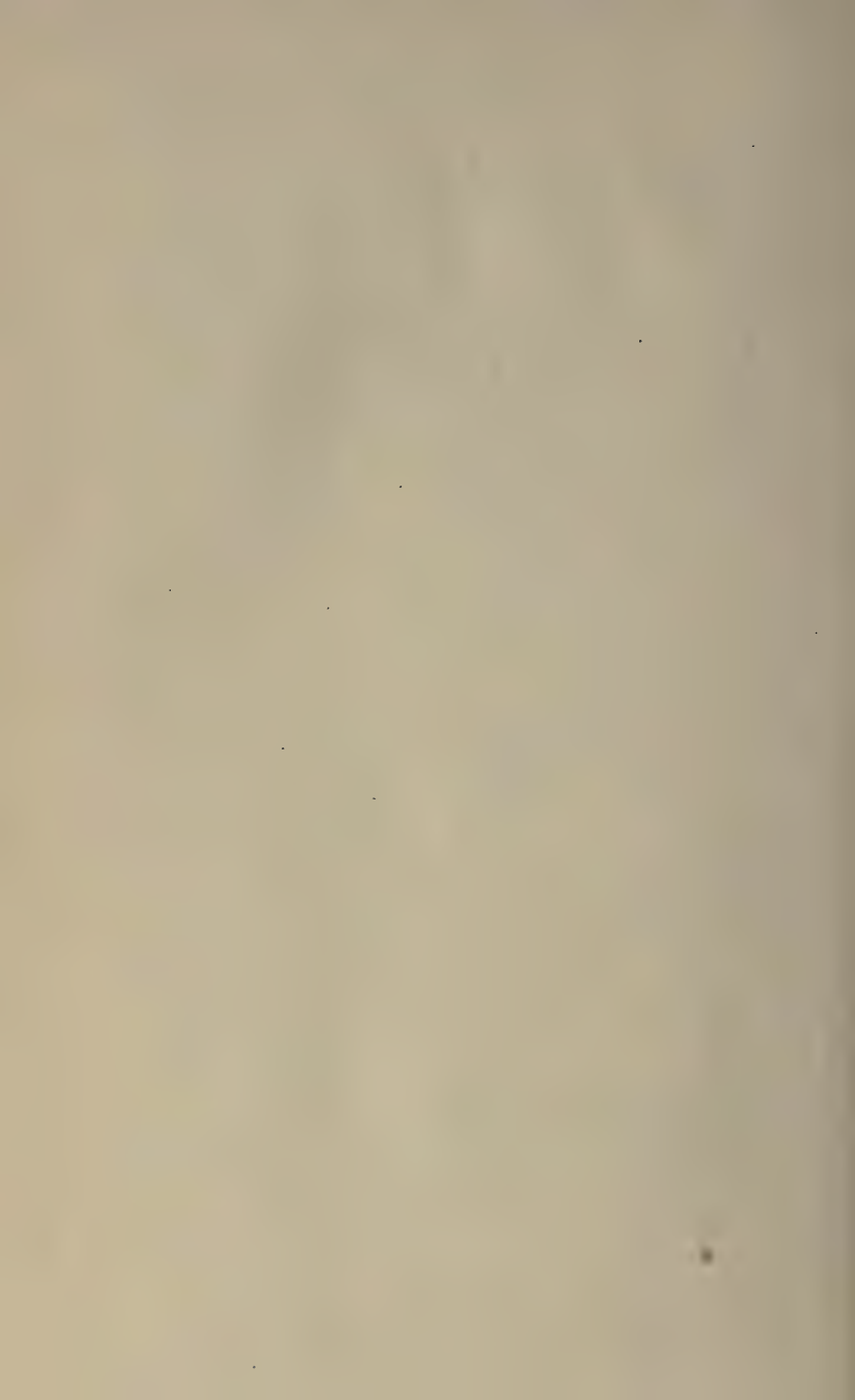
That, it must be confessed, is an ideal perhaps high-flown. There was, and still lives, a social reformer who at last despaired and said, ‘It’s no

good ; I go on because I've started ; but what we want in order to set things right is a new religion, and only that can do it.' A new spirit in dealing with the poor is indeed wanted ; a spirit of understanding and of patience, and, above all, of good-fellowship. From that the rest, or at all events a good deal of it, would follow, and the problem would begin to be solved the right end foremost.

1908-II.

THE END

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